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artist

Concept Art, Digital & Matte Painting Magazine

Level Up Your Skills!

Characters

New! Dynamic Painting Series

Structures

New! 3D Base Series

Beginners

New! Digital Painting Series

Articles

Sketchbook Of Alex Voshev



Interviews

Nicholas Miles & Viktor Titov



Galleries

Jason Seiler, Eduardo Peña, plus more!



Making Of

'Concrete 7' by Yang Xueguo, plus more!





Editorial

Better late than never, welcome to the 43rd issue of 2DArtist! We're really sorry for the delay this month. One word: Siggraph. So much to do, so little time ... If you're at Siggraph this year, drop by booth #3719 to meet Tom Greenway from the 3DTotal/2DArtist team, and hopefully if you time it right you'll also be able to meet some artists who are featured in our latest book, *Digital Art Masters: Volume 4*, who'll be doing some book signings!

Well, it's halfway through the year already so we thought we'd celebrate the halfway point by kicking off some brand new tutorial series! We've packed the first parts of three new tutorial series into this July issue, starting off with a series aimed to teach the power of 3D in 2D painting, showing you how to create depth and achieve a sense of scale easily in your paintings by utilising the free and easy-to-use software, Google SketchUp. So don't be afraid of the third dimension, simply check out **p.64** to see just how easy it is to apply 3D geometry to your 2D paintings to get some rather impressive results!

Our second new tutorial series begins with **Darren Yeow**, full-time concept artist in Melbourne, Australia, who introduces us to *Dynamic Characters: Enhancing your Character Concepts*. We wanted to put together a series not alike your usual anatomy teachings, but something a little more special and focused on helping you to achieve the very best of your characters. We've therefore asked industry professionals to take us through several stages of character creation. In this first part we look at thumbnailing (**p.88**).

Our other new series for July is one that we hope will be useful to those of us who browse 2DArtist and can only dream of understanding Photoshop like a pro. Well, wish no further: we have Photoshop guru, **Nykolai Aleksander** on hand to teach us how to start painting in Photoshop from scratch, taking us through the tools and techniques we need to know to get started. I'm pretty sure this in-depth series will also teach some of our hardened readers a thing or two as well, and if you've ever seen any of Nykolai's stunning paintings at high resolution then you will understand why the setting up of your Photoshop before you even start to paint is so important. So follow Nykolai's handy guide to painting like an industry professional. We start off by looking at graphics tablets and brush dynamics on **p.96**.

We interview two talented artists this month: **Nicholas Miles**, insect-loving concept artist based in the UK (**p.6**), and **Viktor Titov**, hamster-inspired concept artist and illustrator from Russia (**p.23**). Both are featured in *Digital Art Masters: Volume 4*, and when we stumble across talents as great as these we just want to know more, more, more! So join us as we learn all about Nick's *Insect Dynasty*, and how Viktor plans world domination through outsource company, Grafit LLC!

Our making ofs this month feature the exclusive making of *Aretha Franklin* by **Jason Seiler** (**p.106**), **Yang Xueguo** welcomes us to his world with a walkthrough his painting, *Concrete 7* (be sure to check out his free brush set!) (**p.114**), and **Alex Heath** teaches us how to recycle while we paint (**p.120**).

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Free Stuff!

Wherever you see this symbol, click it to download resources, extras!



Well, I will leave you to enjoy your magazine with what July has left to offer. We'll be back in full swing next month with more great stuff and yet another new tutorial series for you. Till then, stay creative! **Ed.**

Setting up your PDF reader

For optimum viewing of the magazine it is recommended that you have the latest Acrobat Reader installed.

You can download it for free here: [DOWNLOAD!](#)

To view the many double-page spreads featured in 2DArtist magazine, you can set the reader to display 'two-up', which will show double-page spreads as one large landscape image:

1. Open the magazine in Reader;
2. Go to the **View** menu, then **Page display**;
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Get the most out of your Magazine!

If you're having problems viewing the double-page spreads that we feature in this magazine, follow this handy little guide on how to set up your PDF reader!

Contributing Artists

Every month, many artists around the world contribute to 3DCreative and 2DArtist magazines. Here you can find out all about them. If you would like to be a part of 3DCreative or 2DArtist Magazines, please contact:

lynette@3dtotal.com



Nicholas Miles

Working as a concept artist in the games industry, and has been for roughly four years now, whilst developing his digital painting skills in his own time, focusing on sci-fi and fantasy and his personal projects, 'The Insect Dynasty' and 'Exula'. He also likes to write and sculpt, to add a little variation to the mix!

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Richard Tilbury

Has had a passion for drawing since being a couple of feet tall. He studied fine art and was eventually led into the realm of computers several years ago. His brushes have slowly been dissolving in white spirit since the late 90s, and now his graphics tablet has become their successor. He still sketches regularly and balances his time between 2D & 3D – although drawing will always be closest to his heart.

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Darren Yeow

27-year old self-taught illustrator, originally hailing from Adelaide, has worked as a concept artist, user interface designer and art director in video game companies for the past four years, and currently lives in Melbourne. Outside his full-time role as an in-house concept artist working on next-gen games, he tutors hopeful young artists, works on commissioned freelance projects, and is writing a book for those wishing to pursue a career in concept art.

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Alex Heath

22-year old artist from England, Alex has been fascinated with all things sci-fi since he first saw *Aliens* as a child. Since then he has been working hard to improve his skills to get into the concept art industry, so he can create his own monsters, characters and environments for gamers to enjoy. Currently freelance, Alex is looking for work experience within the industry.

heath.himself@gmail.com



Jason Seiler

Has had the pleasure of painting for many magazines, such as TIME and MAD. He's also worked on films for Universal Pictures, and more. He teaches a course on caricature illustration for Schoolism.com, and last year his first book came out, called "Caricature, the Art of Jason Seiler". His second book, "Seiler 2008-2009" will be available this July, as well as a two-hour instructional DVD, "Sketching with Jason Seiler".

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Alex "Rhino" Voroshev

Works in the videogames industry as a concept artist, currently senior artist at Astrum Online specialising in characters, environment and monsters (he has a particular liking for the latter). In his work he uses Photoshop and Painter, as well as traditional materials. He enjoys creating new worlds and populating them with unique creatures.

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Nykolai Aleksander

Born in Germany in 1978, she moved to England in 1999, and currently lives in South Africa with her husband. She's been painting digitally since 2002, and works as a freelance illustrator for both private clients and companies.



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Robin Olausson

24-years old from south Sweden, currently a student at the school of future entertainment in Karlshamn,

and working as a freelance concept artist. He's currently looking for an in-house position anywhere around the globe. He's been freelancing for 2-3 years for different companies and is also familiar working with 3D applications, such as Maya and ZBrush.

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Yang Xueguo

From China, Yang always liked painting as a young boy and is now an art teacher working with 3D animation and digital painting. Surreal art and digital painting in his city is an unusual thing, but he loves it very much and always does it for himself. Most of his ideas come from life and feelings; he uses different things to express the world that he lives in. He simply wants to touch people's hearts with his honest art.



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Rosa Hughes

Can peel mandarins really fast, kick a hackysack 32 times, and animates for a living. She currently lives in Brisbane, Australia where she works for a pokies company, leaving little bits of her soul behind in a shower of sparkling gold and glittering teeth. One day she hopes to finish all of the projects she's started over her 23 years.

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Would You Like To Contribute To 3DCreative Or 2DArtist Magazines?

We are always looking for tutorial artists, gallery submissions, potential interviewees, 'making of' writers, and more. For more information, please send a link to your work to: lynette@3dtotal.com

“There’s something hugely liberating in knowing that by planning your goals and putting the hours in you can pretty much go as far as your desires can take you.”

In the words of a colleague, Nick Miles is “a talented guy”. Working as a concept artist for Blitz Games in the UK, he still somehow finds the time to pursue his world-building project *The Insect Dynasty*. We recently got the chance to sit down with Nick and find out just what this project is all about, and what it is about insects that he finds so fascinating.



Nicholas Gates

Nicholas Miles

Hey Nick – welcome to the pages of *2DArtist*!

Now if I've got my facts right, you're a UK-based, games concept artist, who's been working in the industry for the last three years.

You've worked on titles from the *Spongebob Squarepants* series, as well as producing a real mixture of fantastic personal pieces, one of which is featuring in our very own *Digital Art Masters: Volume 4*! So I guess what I'd like to know is how you came to be where you are today. Did you just wake up one morning and decide you wanted to be an artist?

Hey Jo. Like a lot of kids, I loved to draw. I remember smothering the kitchen floor in paintings as a kid. Unknowingly my mum would wander into this minefield of hastily painted pictures. The not quite dry sheets of printer paper would stick to her shoes and consequently I'd find myself in a spot of bother. Probably one of the few times where being artistic didn't do me any favours!

“Your life is a long time to do something you don’t enjoy”

I didn't set out to become an artist; in hindsight I can see now that I did spend a lot of time on creative endeavours, but I think it was just something I did and over time it found me. The more time I spent focused on my art the more my passion for exploring creative avenues grew until one day I realised that I couldn't see myself doing anything else in my life.

I gather that you're a predominantly self-taught artist. What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages to such a position? And just how do you go about teaching yourself how to be an artist? I would imagine it requires a lot of practice and patience!

I've been focused on developing my illustration and concept skills ever since I left University.



However, illustration was not initially my chosen field. Whilst I enrolled in an Art Foundation course like many students, my chosen field was Product Design before moving onto Graphic Design which I carried on into University. I think originally I was torn between following my heart

and getting a “real job” which is a term you hear a lot when you're a student!

I then realised that your life is a long time to do something you don't enjoy and that I wanted to wake up everyday looking forward to the



creative challenges ahead, so I completely shifted gears and focused on what I would need to become a concept artist. Though I had a basic level of illustrative skill and a fleeting knowledge of applications like Photoshop, I knew I'd have to be a lot better, so I knuckled down and set myself to task.

Starting out I found a number of online art forums; these were incredibly inspiring and hugely humbling all at the same time. Through seeing the art of professional concept artists and freelance illustrators, I could see how high the quality bar was set and so establish the criteria I would need to meet in order to become a concept artist.

The first year after university is an exciting time, but also an uncertain one. I quickly developed a support network; I talked to artists online, learned from their experiences, picked up advice on working practices where I could and applied them at every opportunity. I learnt a lot over that first year by networking and just putting the

“The first year after university is an exciting time, but also an uncertain one”

hours into developing my drawing and painting skills. It's daunting to think that after education you're totally in control of your own future, but then there's something hugely liberating in knowing that by planning your goals and putting the hours in you can pretty much go as far as your desires can take you.

I think being self taught allows you the latitude to explore and develop your own style without being so heavily influenced by those around you that you start to lose some of that personal flair before it's had the chance to surface. At the same time though, there isn't the support there that you'd find on a specialised course where everyone is working towards a similar goal. You need to be very motivated as no one else is going to do that for you. Specialised courses





will often help you establish links with the industry, but if you're self taught you're going to have to do that yourself, so networking skills are especially important.

I think all of us here at 3DTOTAL can empathise with that "I should get a proper job" feeling! Launching yourself into the artistic industry isn't a move for the faint hearted and I imagine that every artist has gone through a few uncertain times during their career. So what was your first proper artistic job? And as a self-taught artist, was it hard to get or did you find that you were judged more on your artistic ability than what degree you studied at university?

My first taste of the industry came in the form of storyboarding for indie filmmaking collectives in the UK. I was eager for the experience and it was a good insight into what it would be like to work alongside producers and hone someone else's vision into something slightly less nebulous than the usual mental meanderings! It was great experience and it was through building up these contacts and various storyboarding projects that I was able to make a move into the games industry.

I found my way to Blitz Games Studios and applied for the role of Concept Artist. Despite the fact I was very much a rookie, all the work I'd done in the previous year, including the work as a storyboard artist, helped to prove that I was dedicated to becoming a concept artist. I think I was very fortunate to come across a guy (who would later become my Art Manager) who was willing to take a chance on a graduate such as myself and give them a chance to prove themselves. Personally I think a lot of opportunities that are offered to us in any area of the creative industry



arise through 40% talent and 60% perseverance. Like everyone, when I was starting out there were a lot of dead ends; a lot of polite rejection letters. I just kept at it, worked harder, pushed through the uncertain times and I think it's this dogged determination that helped me get where I am.

Now I just have to ask you about *The Insect Dynasty*, because I've seen some of the artwork for it and quite frankly, it looks amazing! For those uninitiated out there, could you just give us a quick overview of what this project is all about?

The Insect Dynasty was spawned from the first Mantis Queen portrait. Initially it was not my intention to form a larger brief from this portrait, but as I continued to paint I found myself wondering about her backstory: what kind of world she lived in; her experiences as a ruler; the expectations placed upon her. Very quickly I realised I had the makings of a wildly dynamic world, which I called *The Insect Dynasty*.

“I get into a cold sweat if I’m away from a Wacom tablet for more than an hour”

My intention is to tell the story of these characters. To describe a world of great beauty where tenuous alliances between wildly exotic beings are in a constant state of flux and where the slow, relentless grind of conflict is so ensconced amongst certain members of the Dynasty that they know nothing else. This is a world of contrasts, where highly ordered hierarchies clash with turbulent tribes. As the factions shift and vie for power they are all slowly falling under the influence of another force, something they will come to know as the Gloaming.





Initially *The Insect Dynasty* will come to life through my paintings, but in the background I'm writing the novel to compliment and enrich the art, which I hope to publish in some form late next year. The website (<http://www.theinsectdynasty.com>) will go online this July and I'll continue to expand this site as the story approaches completion.

Wow – not only content with creating an entire world, but you're also writing a novel! You're obviously not afraid of hard work [Laughs]. Have

you done much writing on this kind of scale before? And how is the novel progressing? Is a fully-illustrated version of *The Insect Dynasty* saga going to hit the shelves any time in the near future? (If so I'd love to buy one!)

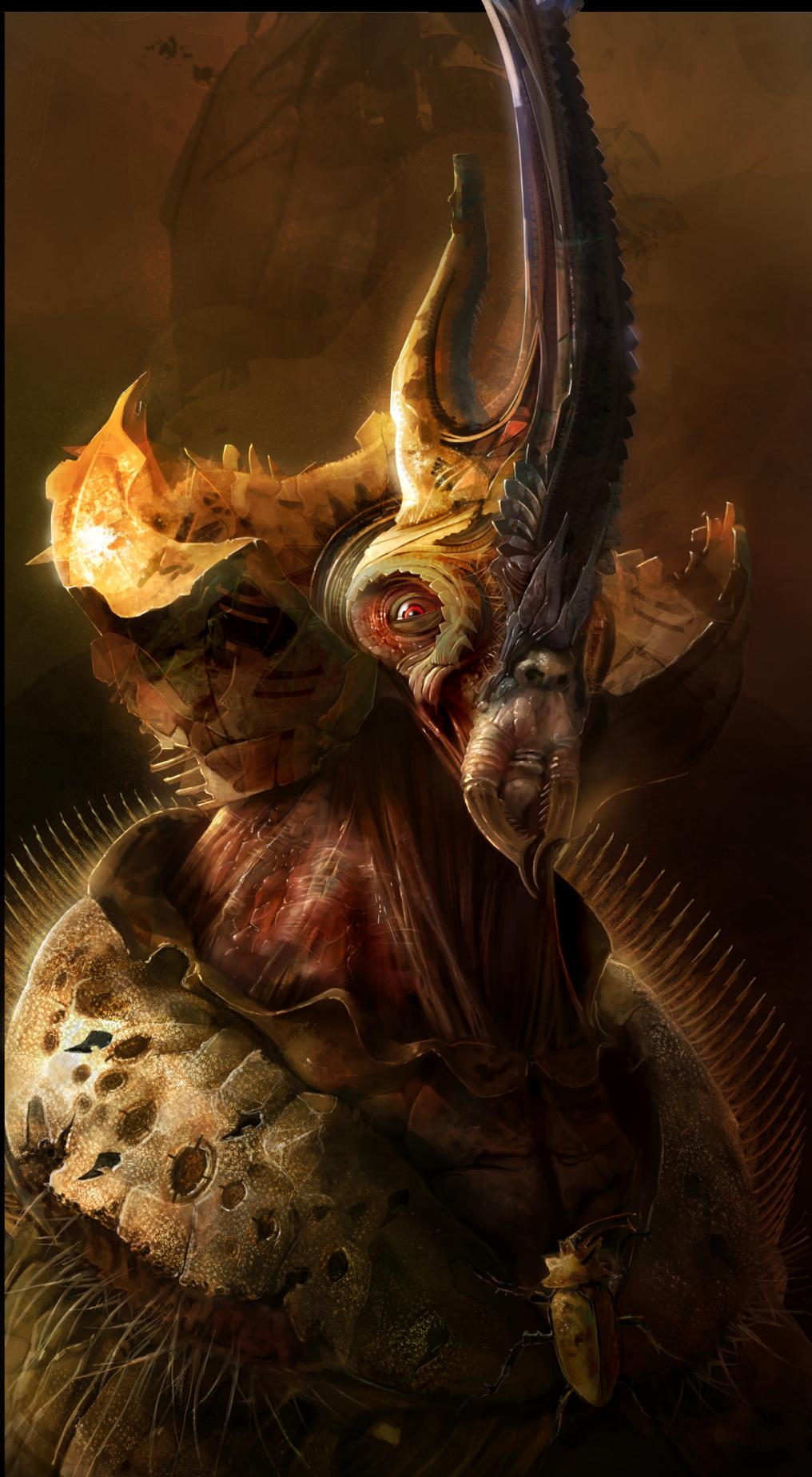
[Laughs] Yeah, I get into a cold sweat if I'm away from a Wacom tablet for more than an hour! There is definitely a lot of work involved and just when you think you couldn't cram anymore into a working day, you find there's a whole other level of "busy" that makes the old you look like a complete slacker.

This is my first large scale writing project. I think my time as a storyboard artist has given me a good sense of how to pace a story and my partner Sally is an English teacher, so hopefully she'll pick me up on some of my quirker grammar!

The Insect Dynasty is currently in pre-production. I've been busy establishing the different races, such as the Mantids and Beetles. By laying out the groundwork I can get a good feel for how each society functions, how







their hierarchies flow and what is expected of each member of that society. It's great fun and very insightful to place yourself, for example, in the shoes of a Beetle Soldier and run through what a day in their life would be like.

The aim is to compile a sort of fact file for each race to establish their mindsets, their strengths and, more interestingly, their weaknesses. This will help me to achieve an intuitive feel for how each race will deal with the problems they will face. The goal is to take this framework and apply it to the main story arc in such a way that it assists the narrative but isn't so meticulous that it starts to restrict the flow of the storyline, as these things invariably take on a life of their own. The initial draft will take shape in the second half of this year and I'll take it from there.

What's your typical working process for creating one of your *Insect Dynasty* characters, from start to finish? And do you start with a sketch and then just see where your imagination takes you, or now that the project has been established, do you already have a clear idea about the characters' appearances and background before you put your digital paint onto the canvas?

I use a lot of the tried and tested techniques, such as silhouette generation. Another route is taking a canvas, applying abstract forms and seeking out characters from this chaos of brush strokes. There's also a lot of rough pencil sketches involved. Often I will apply all these techniques in the creation of a singular character.

The random form generation is great for establishing routes of exploration that you might not have initially considered. These can then be taken back and used for the basis of silhouette generation and then I can add more clarity to the design by sketching out these forms in pencil. From there I might then overlay more of the random shape generation processes to push the design further.





The basic rules for the look of *The Insect Dynasty* have been laid down. For example, the Mantids stand from about 6 to 12ft in height and rely more on their speed and agility than brute strength. They share more physical traits with humans than the formidable Beetles. These guys loom larger still and, as you can imagine, rely on their strength and heavy armour to carry them to their goal. There are others, like the Butterfly Assassin, who are only about 12 inches in height, so they have a real challenge in holding their own against these other formidable races. By having a basic rule set I can ensure that the races have enough consistent visual cues to make them a cohesive whole, whilst also coexisting with the other races to make this world as believable as possible.

Seeing as they provide the backbone for your whole project, I just have to ask: what is it about insects that you find so inspiring?

One of the skills needed as a concept artist is to make your designs fit as coherently and believably into the given brief as possible, which entails thorough research. The research phase is a lot of fun as you're constantly discovering things that push your perceptions of the realms of possibility. It doesn't matter how crazy you think your ideas are, there's a good chance nature's already been there, done that and pushed it ten times further than you thought possible. This is how I arrived at insects. The sheer diversity in size, form, colour, texture, function, locomotion and so on is just a visual feast; an unending source of inspiration and one that for this project I couldn't resist.

“Insects are just a visual feast; an unending source of inspiration”

Somewhat ironically though I'm actually a little afraid of spiders. I recently purchased a display of pinned insects, as hands-on research is often invaluable. It does however have a big old tarantula in the middle of the display, so when it's not in use I have to keep it on a shelf above eye level as shocking myself by catching sight





of a giant spider every few minutes probably wouldn't do much for my nerves!

I'm glad I'm not the only one who suffers from spider-fear! Now, your *Insect Dynasty* creations aside, I love how character-driven the majority of your art is. There's such a sense of personality in each and every piece; I really want to know more about the characters and how they came to be in the situations that you've depicted. My particular favourite has to be "Harbinger of Kestralis", which is also a great example of the really intense, vibrant, almost fluorescent colour that you seem to favour. With all the various artistic choices out there, and the different directions your artwork could have taken, how did you arrive at this particular artistic style? Colour is one of those things I've never been afraid to play with. I think all artists have a core skill which they can innately feel out; I know some who have a real gift for dynamic illustration, others for something more specific like architecture. I think mine is probably colour. People used to comment on how my paintings would make their eyeballs bleed! I think over the last three or four years, as my understanding of the application of light and colour has sharpened, I've become more adventurous with the palettes I choose, giving the images clout where needed to help guide the viewer's eye around the composition without resorting to putting anyone's eyeballs under too much strain! Paintings like "Harbinger of Kestralis" are there to remind me to never lose that playful aspect of my palettes, to not be afraid and to sometimes just throw down some bold colours and see where it leads.

I'm inspired by a great many artists; some are on my doorstep while others are in parts of the world I have never seen, but they all inspire me to push myself further. There's always more to learn, which is one of the reasons why I love being an artist.

Aside from *The Insect Dynasty*, what other projects are you working on at the moment? And



do you have anything lined up for the future, or is it insects all the way?

During the day I continue my role as a games concept artist. *The Insect Dynasty* will definitely take a great deal of my attention through 2009 and 2010. I have other slow burning projects such as *Exula* which is another world building project that I'll bring to fruition after *The Insect Dynasty*. *Exula* features a menagerie of human and alien characters thrown together in a world where the Demi Gods of the past, known as the Guardians, are beginning to exert their influence once more. The "Harbinger of Kestrals" is a painting from the *Exula* world. I've also produced album art for the band Left Below and there may well be more of that in the future. Otherwise I'm just going to keep on indulging my passion and keep drawing, writing and sculpting whenever I get the chance.

Now just a quick question to finish: if you had to name one artist whose work you find particularly striking, or who has influenced you in some way, then who would it be and why?

Just one you say? Crikey [Laughs]! Well I guess I'd have to take it back to grass roots level.

Back in the day when the web was just a series of yoghurt pots and taut string, I'd just graduated from university and was seeking art collectives and the first place I came across was the Flight

"I was, and still am, drawn in by the wonderment and optimism of his [Kazu Kibuishi's] work"

forums run by a guy called Kazu Kibuishi. He's well known for his comic shorts such as *Copper* and his ongoing graphic novel series *Amulet*, much of which can be found on his personal website: www.boltcity.com

Despite the fact he was obviously very busy he always took the time to look over the forum posts and provide critique and encouragement to artists such as myself. I was, and still am, drawn in by the wonderment and optimism much of his work is imbued with. I feel that the narrative drove much of his work and the visuals that accompanied it, be it for a comic or a one-off painting, always enhanced the narrative rather than dictated it. It's difficult to do his work justice so I'll just say that he continues to be

a great source of inspiration, both directly and indirectly, and he helped to give me the strength to forge my own path. I'm very grateful for that! Thank you!

By posting work in places such as the Flight forums I persisted; I took on board the critique I was given and pushed myself to improve. I remember reading magazines like 2DArtist and wondering what it'd be like to be on those pages and now I am - very cool indeed!

And it's been a pleasure to have you here, Nick. Thanks for a great interview and good luck for the future!

Nicholas Miles

For more work by this artist please visit:

<http://www.exula.co.uk/>

<http://www.theinsectdynasty.com> (coming soon)

<http://www.nicksdesk.co.uk> (coming soon)

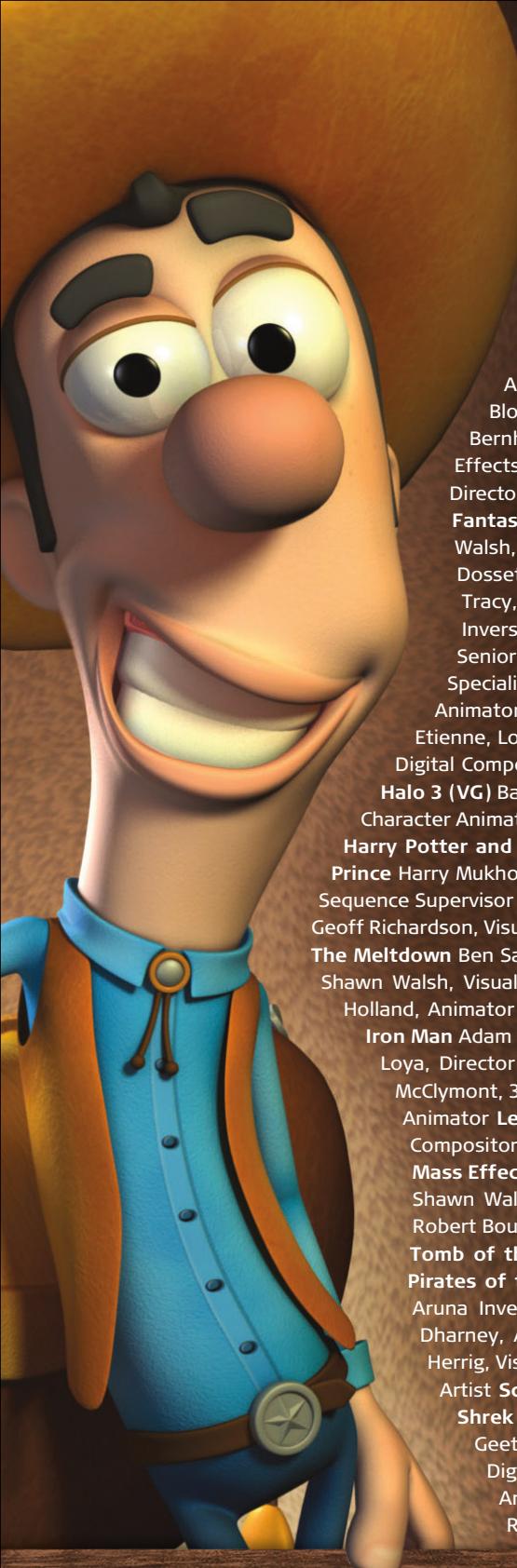
Or contact them at:

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Interviewed by: **Jo Hargreaves**







Vancouver Film School alumni credits include **Across the Universe** Geeta Basantani, Digital Compositor **Alias** Scott Dewis, Visual Effects Artist **Babel** Luis Blackaller, Storyboard Artist | Lon Molnar, Visual Effects Supervisor **Battlestar Galactica** Daniel Osaki, Lead Modeler | Megan Majewski, 3D Animator | Alec McClymont, 3D Artist **Bioshock 2** (VG) Jacob Palmer, Animator **Bolt** Lino Di Salvo, Supervising Animator/Voice of **Vinnie Charlotte's Web** Aruna Inversin, Digital Compositor | Adam Yaniv, Character Animator | Tony Etienne, Lead Lighter | Kristin Sedore, Lighter **The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian** Andreas Hikel, Pre-Visualization Artist | Christoph Schinko, Character Animator | Jami Gigot, Senior Layout Artist **Cloverfield** Nicholas Markel, Pre-Visualization Supervisor **Constantine** Aruna Inversin, Digital Compositor **The Dark Knight** Pietro Ponti, Lead CG Lighting Artist **Dead Like Me** Daniel Osaki, Visual Effects Artist | Alec McClymont, 3D Artist **Diablo III** Alvaro Buendia, Cinematic Artist | Steven Chen, Cinematic Artist **District 9** Neill Blomkamp, Director | Shawn Walsh, Visual Effects Executive Producer | Jelmer Boskma, Modeler Bernhard Kimbacher, Compositor | Julianna Kolakis, Creature Texture Painter | Adam Marisett, Visual Effects Artist | James McPhail, Visual Effects Technical Director | Dominic Cheung, Lighting Technical Director | Grant Wilson, Animator | Joey Wilson, Modeler **Family Guy** Michael Loya, Storyboard Artist **Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer** Arun Ram-Mohan, Lighting Technical Director | Shawn Walsh, Visual Effects Executive Producer | Jessica Alcorn, Compositor **Gears of War** (VG) Scott Dossett, Animator **G.I. Joe: The Tracy**, Visual Effects Editorial Supervisor | Aruna Inversin, Digital Compositor **Rise of Cobra** Allen Stewart, Senior Animator | Jelmer Boskma, Modeler **The Godfather** (VG) Kirk Chantraine, Motion Capture Specialist **The Golden Compass** Adam Yaniv, Animator | Chad Moffitt, Animator | Thom Roberts, Animator | Ben Sanders, Animator | Andrew Lawson, Animator | Matthias Lowry, Visual Effects | Tony Etienne, Look Development | Justin Hammond, Lighter | Pearl Hsu, Effects Technical Director | Aruna Inversin, Digital Compositor | Fion Mok, Matchmove Artist **Hairspray** Lon Molnar, Visual Effects Production Executive **Halo 3** (VG) Bartek Kujbida, Character Animator **Happy Feet** Ben Sanders, Character Animator | Thom Roberts, Character Animator **Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban** Shawn Walsh, Color & Lighting Technical Director **Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix** Pietro Ponti, Technical Director **Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince** Harry Mukhopadhyay, Lead Effects Technical Director **Hellboy II: The Golden Army** Christoph Ammann, 3D Sequence Supervisor **Horton Hears a Who** Arun Ram-Mohan, Lighting Technical Director | Brent Wong, Modeler **Hulk** Geoff Richardson, Visual Effects Editor | **Robot** Daniel Osaki, CGI Modeler | Megan Majewski, Pre-Visualization **Ice Age: The Meltdown** Ben Sanders, Character Animator | Arun Ram-Mohan, Lighting Technical Director **The Incredible Hulk** Shawn Walsh, Visual Effects Executive Producer | Tony Etienne, Look Development Lead **The Incredibles** Daniel Holland, Animator **Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull** Henri Tan, Creature Technical Director **Iron Man** Adam Marisett, Visual Effects Artist **King Kong** Chad Moffitt, Senior Animator **King of the Hill** Michael Loya, Director **Kingdom Hospital** Daniel Osaki, Visual Effects Artist | Megan Majewski, 3D Animator | Alec McClymont, 3D Artist **Kingdom of Heaven** Shawn Walsh, Digital Compositor **Left 4 Dead** (VG) Nick Maggiore, Animator **Letters from Iwo Jima** Aruna Inversin, Digital Compositor **Live Free or Die Hard** Jessica Alcorn, Compositor **Lord of the Rings Trilogy** Chad Moffitt, Senior Animator **Lost** Scott Dewis, Visual Effects Artist **Mass Effect** (VG) Sung-Hun (Ryan) Lim, 3D Modeler **Matrix: Revolutions** Aruna Inversin, Digital Compositor Shawn Walsh, Color & Lighting Technical Director **Master & Commander: The Far Side of the World** Robert Bourgeault, CG Artist **Metal Gear Solid 4** (VG) Josh Herrig, Artist | Yuta Shimizu, Artist **The Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor** Aruna Inversin, Digital Compositor **Persepolis** Marianne Lebel, Animator **Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End** Ben Sanders, Character Animator | Allen Holbrook, Animator Aruna Inversin, Digital Compositor **The Pirates Who Don't Do Anything: A VeggieTales Movie** Mike Dharney, Animation Supervisor **Reign of Fire** Lino DiSalvo, Animator **Resident Evil: Extinction** Joshua Herrig, Visual Effects Artist **Robots** Arun Ram-Mohan, Additional Lighting **Rome** Teh-Wei Yeh, Matchmove Artist **Scarface** (VG) Maya Zuckerman, Mocap 3D Generalist **Shrek the Third** Rani Naamani, Animator **Shrek the Third** (VG) Samuel Tung, Technical Artist **Sin City** Michael Cozens, Lead Animator **Smallville** Geeta Basantani, Lead Compositor **Star Trek** Aruna Inversin, Digital Compositor | Tom Piedmont, Digital Plate Restoration **Star Wars Episode III: Revenge of the Sith** Andrew Doucette, Character Animator | Nicholas Markel, Pre-Visualization **Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic** (VG) Arun Ram-Mohan, 3D Artist | Jessica Mih, Level Artist **Stargate: Atlantis** Daniel Osaki, 3D Animator

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Megan Majewski, 3D Animator | Alec McClymont, 3D Artist **Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street** Jami Gigot, Concept Artist **Terminator Salvation** Teh-wei Yeh, Lighting Technical Director | Geeta Basantani, Digital Matte Painter **Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen** Bryan Jones, Compositor | Aruna Inversin, Digital Compositor | Henri Tan, Creature Technical Director | Teh-wei Yeh, Digital Artist | Stephen King, Animator **Twilight** Geoffrey Hancock, Digital Effects Supervisor **Unreal Tournament III** (VG) Scott Dossett, Artist **Valiant** Robert Bourgeault, Lighting Technical Director **WALL-E** Mark Shirra, Layout Artist | Bill Watral, Effects Artist | Daniel Holland, Production Artist **Watchmen** Lon Molnar, Visual Effects Supervisor **World of Warcraft: Burning Crusade** (VG) Carman Cheung, Animator **Warhammer 40,000: Dawn of War II** (VG) Ian Cumming, Senior Artist | Nathan Hocken, Lead Animator **A Wrinkle in Time** Aruna Inversin, Digital Compositor and many more.

Elves, goblins, knife-throwers, hamsters, dragons, werewolves and beautiful women ... What more could you ask for? After working with Viktor recently on our *Digital Art Masters: Volume 4* book project we were thrilled when he agreed to an interview so we could get to know more about the mind behind the hand that creates such stunning artwork. Or is it the artwork that dictates to Viktor what he creates? Decide for yourself – read on to find out more about this intriguing artist, and how a recent blow to the head has made him rediscover his passion for life.

“You have the feeling that it’s not you drawing the characters, but that they are the ones operating your hand and want you to paint them that way!”



VIKTOR

THE

VIKTOR TITOV

Hi Viktor, thanks for agreeing to this interview. So first of all: hamsters. What's this all about? I go onto your website, www.hamsterfly.com, and there I find a flying hamster. This fury friend also re-appears in your fantastic image, "Dragon Crash" (a personal favourite of ours, I might add). So what's the story behind the hamster...? Well, I simply love hamsters; they are fluffy, strong and noble animals! I had a hamster some time ago, he was really cool, and he was always grabbing his sword and swinging it all around the place. [Laughs] But seriously though, I actually thought up the nickname first, and then all the stories and pictures about hamsters appeared later on.

Ah ok, I was imagining some really weird but wonderful tale of hamsters during your childhood that led to the inspiration. I have a hamster at the moment and he really is a cool little dude ... but if I gave him a sword he'd probably just bite it, then wee on it, and then get bored of it. Anyway! Moving on, do you find storytelling is a big part of your artwork? Where do you get your inspiration from for most of your art projects and stories?

The most interesting thing is that sometimes you start to draw on a blank page without any ideas, and gradually, with each brushstroke the characters become alive. It is very amusing because when this happens you have the feeling that it's not you drawing the characters, but that they are the ones operating your hand and want you to paint them that way!

[Laughs] That has to be one of my favourite quotes to date! So you're living and working in Russia as a concept artist and illustrator. How did you get into concept art and illustration – did you study at an art school or are you self-



taught? Can you give us a little insight into how you got into the industry and how you keep on your toes?

Like many other artists, I studied art at school and then went onto art college. It then turned out that my first job was as a 3D character animator in a games development company, but even then I was still training my art skills at home after work. I then became lead animator, 3D modeller, and then went freelance for a

while. I finally got a job as a concept artist for Nival Online, which is a big Russian game development company where I worked for two years creating characters for *Allods Online*, the MMORPG with a \$12 million budget – which is a record for Russian development!

I am now a freelance artist and co-founder of an art outsource company which produces all types of 2D and 3D graphics, mainly specialising in





illustrations, concept art and 3D models for games. We have collected some of the best Russian artists in the industry, and we have great plans for the future!



Editions DAGDA
www.editions-dagda.com

Wow, that sounds very exciting; can you tell us a little more about this art outsource company? How did it come about, and can you tell us some of your plans for the future? Can you also perhaps spill some of the names of the artists you're working with? We're nosy like that, you see [Laughs]!

Grafit LLC is a young, growing company with the big ambitions and plans. Right now we have seven 2D artists and two 3D artists in our command, but we will continue to grow and train our crew as much as possible, considering the world economic crisis of course.

"I often change the colour scheme in the middle of my painting process"

Our main clients are large Russian publishing houses and game developers. There are also some clients from Europe, the US, and even the Chinese companies. All our employees are very talented; each has their own style and strength in a particular field of art. To name names,

our artists include Roman Tulinov, Viktoriya Anokhina, Natalia Gorshkova, Irina Vlasova, Andrey Pervukhn, and Lev Boyko.

Sounds fantastic, we look forward to seeing more from you all! So back to you Viktor, you show a great understanding of colour in your portfolio. Do you have any tips that you can share with us about how you pack a punch using colour in your artwork? We'd love to find out a little about your painting process and how you decide upon your colour scheme!

It's very important to be able to understand the distribution of light, and some knowledge of the laws of physics really helps as well. However, the main thing I consider to be important when working with colour is intuition; for example, I often change the colour scheme in the middle of my painting process using adjustment tools in Photoshop. I think that for the proper use of colour you need experience; you should observe the world around you and take note of the beauty within it.



Ah, that's really interesting that you say you'll often change colour scheme mid-painting. What are the tools you use to do this for a smooth transition? And about taking notice of the beauty in the world around you, what has been the most amazing thing in nature you've seen recently that has inspired – or is going to inspire – an artwork?

I often use the Curves tool, Hue/Saturation, sometimes Color Balance ... Someday I will find the time to write a tutorial about the tools that I use; how to make a good image from a bad one by applying some colour correction, texture and filters!

So what can I say about inspiration? Well, I think it's a very strange thing to be honest. Sometimes it comes from nowhere; you can be simply drifting through your usual daily routine, and then when you get home in the evening and get to your graphics tablet, you can be bloating with ideas and the desire to paint! Whereas, other times, such as after a day of visiting art exhibitions or attending other interesting events, you quite simply have no energy left to be creative at the end of the day, despite being full of ideas.

I derive inspiration from everywhere, really. It's necessary to celebrate all that is around you, and to appreciate every minute of your life. I recently had a blow from a falling brick to my head – luckily all ended well. But after it happened, I began to appreciate the beauty of the world around me much more strongly [Laughs]!

Oh gosh, we're really pleased to hear you survived the falling brick, Viktor! I had a penny fall on my head once from a height, and that was painful enough, so I can only imagine the sheer pain of a falling brick! We hope you recovered/are recovering well. So back to your artwork: elves, goblins, knife-throwers, hamsters, dragons, werewolves and beautiful women – your work would certainly fall into the fantasy realm. So what is it about fantasy art that really gets you going? Are there any others areas of art that you like to dabble in? It occurred spontaneously, really. In the beginning, I worked with various subjects, but then over time it worked out that I got some

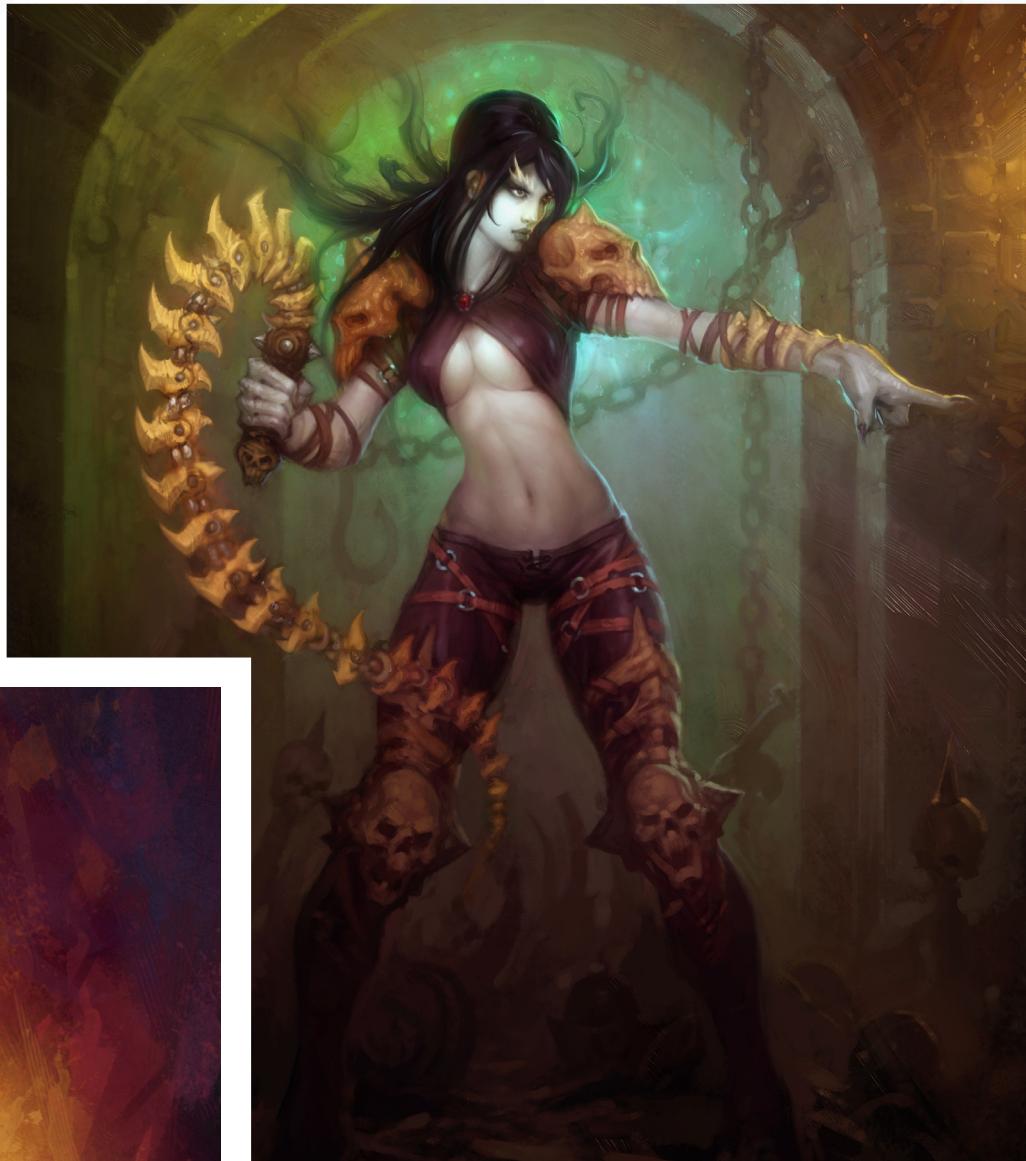




fantasy-style commissions, and that in turn generated even more clients wanting work in a similar style, and so the vicious cycle began! I love other realms as well though, for example the sci-fi genre, and I hope to strengthen my skills in this area in the foreseeable future.

Sci-fi art, hey – I'd love to see your works on this theme! You've gone and teased us with that now haven't you? Ok, so let's talk sci-fi: what do you think will be your first art project to tackle the sci-fi genre, and where will you seek your inspiration from? And on the topic of inspiration, which artists do you generally turn to on a day-by-day basis to help inspire your own art?

Actually I have already worked on one sci-fi project in which I made some illustrations for



Eclipse Phase, a book by InMediaRes Productions, LLC. Hopefully when the book is released I can publish the pictures in my portfolio.

I usually search the different art forums and galleries for inspirational pictures, but there are certain artists that have affected me most of all, such as Craig Mullins, Gerald Brom and Paul Bonner. At present, I am very strongly impressed by the work of Paul Bonner, because he has great skill in depicting light and shade in his images. He also makes very realistic and charming fantasy characters!

It seems Craig and Brom are amongst the top influences in the industry – very popular choices with our interviewees so far! So you seem to get a lot of commissions for the likes of book cover art and DVD game covers. Can you give us any advice about how to get work in this area? I'm also curious: if you could have any commission in the world, what would you want it to be, and why?

Well, I simply post my pictures in online galleries and forums – some



of the people that see my works there are, of course, my potential customers. It's very seldom that I will need to go out and specifically search for work. If you have recognition, you will have commissions!

If I could have any commission in the world, I would like to do concept artwork for the movies – either sci-fi or fantasy.

Is there any recent concept artwork for movies that you've seen that has made you think, "Wow! I really wish I'd been involved in that!" And along the same lines, are there any movies – past or present – that you'd love the opportunity to work for? Would you say that working as a concept artist for the movies is your future career ambition, or do you have other plans?

Oh, I like many movies: *The Lord of the Rings*, *Star Wars*, *The Matrix*, *The Terminator*, *Pan's Labyrinth* ... I like it when a film has its own considered visual style. And I've always wondered how great it would be to make concept drawings or storyboards for such beautiful films as these. Unfortunately though,

"If you have recognition, you will have commissions!"

there are very few films shot in Russia, and films with good visual effects are even fewer, so I hope for the future to move to a country with an advanced film industry. However, I'm still happy working here as a freelance illustrator and concept artist, too.

Well, we wish you all the best with your career aspirations Viktor. Thanks for this interview; it's been great talking to you and also learning a little bit more about your career path, your artwork and what inspires you. One last question and it's an old favourite of ours: if you could offer our readers just one piece of advice – and as we're talking about just one here, we mean something really profound [Laughs] – then what would it be?



It would be a short piece of advice: be careful with your thoughts, because they have a habit of coming true. I would also like to say thanks for this great experience – it's been fun answering these questions!

You're welcome Viktor, keep in touch!

Viktor Titov

For more work by this artist please visit:

<http://www.hamsterfly.com/>

<http://www.hamsterfly.deviantart.com>

Or contact them at:

viktortitov@yahoo.com

Interviewed by: Lynette Clee



AD 09.

SKETCHBOOK OF ALEX "RHINO" VOROSHEV

Creator of all things nasty that bite and rip and claw and form your gaming enemies, Alex "Rhino"

Voroshev teaches us a thing or two from his knowledge bank and experience as a lead concept

artist for games.

SKETCHBOOK OF ALEX 'RHINO' VOROSHEV

Working as a lead concept artist, I create concepts of locations, monsters, objects and characters. Prior to working on the concept for any object, character or location, I always start with a dash, silhouette, blur, or just a few strokes to give my imagination the impulse to create something new. When working on a concept for a game I keep in mind the characteristics of the

game for which it is being developed. A game engine has certain restrictions, and the ultimate goal is to create an expressive image which will look in game just as intended. For next-gen engines I use one approach, and for sprite-oriented games I come up with quite a different one. I need to consider not only different details on the objects, but also their size in game.

Creating a super-detailed sketch for a strategy game or an RPG, where your character can be seen only from a bird's-eye view is a mere waste of time and effort, and the result would not be what was intended. So in this article, I'm going to give some recommendations and describe my process of working when creating concept sketches for games.

IMP

Working on the Imp image, I made it my mission to create an unconventional concept. Having studied several images of imps created by other artists on the internet, I grasped what peculiarities they employed and chose to take an alternative approach with my own interpretation. I didn't want to depict just an ordinary imp; I wanted to create an image dissimilar with any others I'd seen, providing that my design didn't lose the traditional demonic essence of the creature.

The game concept required a creature which gave the impression of aggressiveness, but at the same time did not provoke much fear. I got exactly what I wanted after I combined the features of an animal and an ape-type man, added some horns – which were a must – and dressed him up in heavily spiked armour. I achieved not a nasty little demon, but a cruel hunter from some primitive tribe – the perfect enemy for any gamer (Fig.01)!





© 2007-2009 Astrum Online Entertainment Fig.02

MANTICORA

This concept was a rather complex character to design as it has a distinctive set of characteristics that are well known in myths of this kind, and if you give up on them then you risk making the creature unrecognisable. My additions to the traditional interpretation were a muzzle of a predatory ape-man, rather than a human face, spikes on the head, tail and paws, and I also invented a pair of odd Trichoplax wings for her (Fig.02).

YETI

More often than not, artists depict a yeti as a naked ape-man type creature. However, after adding a crude weapon, primitive clothing, and skull decoration, my yeti became a creature which, in my opinion, would blend more into the game environment. I felt that the clothing, weaponry and other accessories that he adorns stir the imagination and give the gamer ideas about the culture and general lifestyle of these creatures (Fig.03).



CENTAUR

This centaur is not your average Ancient Greek dude with the appearance of a stripper and the body of a horse, but rather I took the concept of centaur – a man with a horse's body – just as a basis. I replaced the body of a horse with the body of a huge cat, added animal fangs and a mane to his face, and dressed him in a sort of rough armour. In the end he reminded me more of a severe Northern warrior – he's certainly no longer a centaur (Fig.04)!





CHIMERAS

When working on sketches of chimeras, such as ghosts and demons, I prefer using a dark background as it allows me to create an image without distracting myself with elaborate lighting and other details. Also, any gleaming objects look much better on darker backgrounds (**Fig.05a – 05b**).

08.



Ⓐ 09.

When working on a character or creature concept, it is very important not to make the image too busy with details (Fig.06a – 06b). An image is formed from two-to-three elements which shape the character. You don't need a jumbled mass of detail which serves no other function than to distract the gamer! This is what I consider to be my basic rule.



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Also, I believe that the importance of exploring the artworks of other authors cannot be overstated. It allows you to find new ideas, methods, and helps you to develop and accumulate a knowledgebase. Without this knowledge, it will be very difficult for you to create impressive concept art.

I wish you the best of luck in your artworks. You can check out more of my art and some tutorials on my website, and you are welcome to contact me by email with any questions. Thanks for reading!

Alex "Rhino" Voroshev

For more information please visit:

<http://www.voroshev.com>

<http://www.mechanicalartist.blogspot.com>

Or contact them at:

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This Month we Feature:

Jason Seiler
Andreas Rocha
Damián Linossi
Arnaud Valette
Ioan Dumitrescu
Eduardo Peña
Slava Gedich
Nykolai Aleksander
Alex Broeckel
Carlos Cabrera

THE GALLERY



Lord Cumbancha

Carlos Cabrera

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Check back in with 2DArtist in the August 2009 issue for an interview with Carlos Cabrera, and don't miss his custom brushes tutorial next month to grab some free brushes and learn how to make your own!

Fighter

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Black Hat

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Garage

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This image has been created for 2DArtist for the 'Using 3D as a Base for 2D Painting' tutorial series that started this month. Check back in with us next month to find out how Alex used Google SketchUp and Photoshop to paint this scene.



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Check back in with 2DArtist in the October 2009 issue for
an interview with Jason Seiler, master of the caricature!

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Hit + Miss

Nykolai Aleksander

<http://www.admemento.com/>

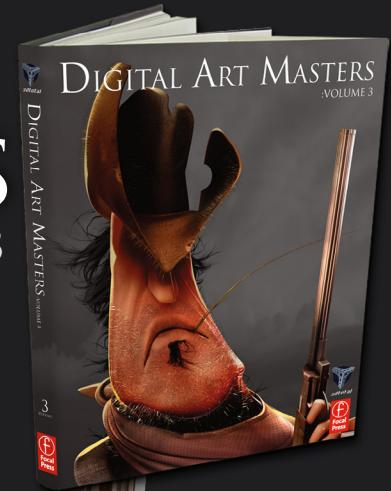
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This image has been created as part of an upcoming Custom Brushes workshop, to be published in the September 2009 issue of 2DArtist with free custom brushes for all our readers, so be sure to check back in with us for the tutorial in September!



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the 2DA challenge

Welcome to the Stylised Challenge!

Every month we run this challenge, which is open for anyone to enter. The challenge runs in the conceptart.org forums and winners get to choose prizes and goodies from the www.3dtotal.com shop! They're also featured in this very magazine, where we display the winners from the previous month's challenge, as well as the "Making Of's" from the month before that..

Robots

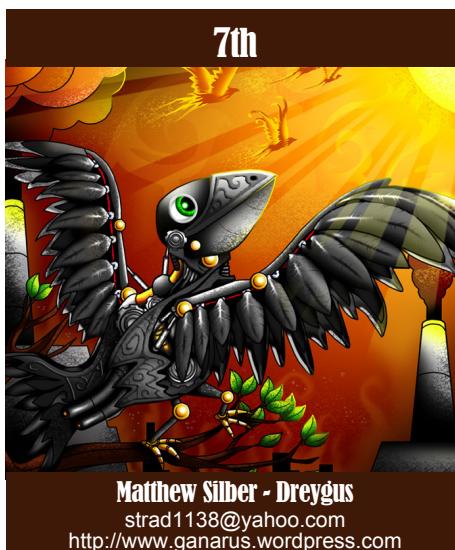
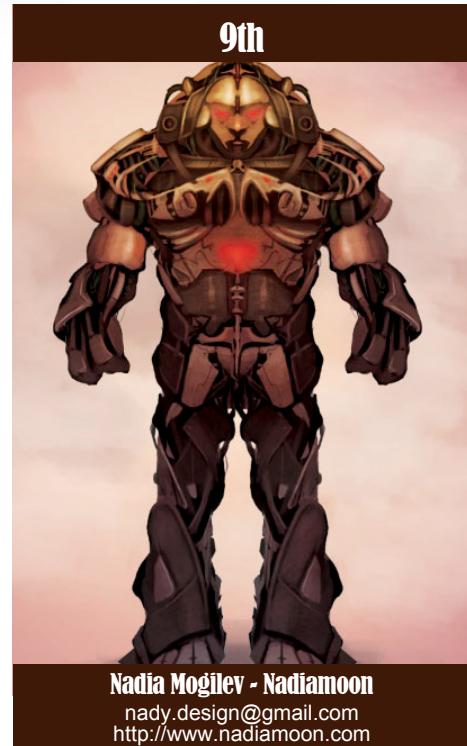
Stylised Character challenge



Stylised Challenge Robots

The Challenge

Welcome to the Super Stylised Monthly Challenge. Each month we select a theme and post some images in the **Forum Thread** for reference. All you have to do is to create a 2D image in line with this theme in a stylised / abstract / cartoon style, whilst keeping your image instantly recognisable. We wanted to publish some content in 2DArtist magazine on how to create stylised images, such as you see in the many feature films and cartoon galleries. We thought this regular competition might bring in just the images and "Making Of's" that we need, whilst giving away great prizes and exposure. This month's theme was "**Robots**". Here you can see the top placed entries, as voted for by the public.



What are we looking for?

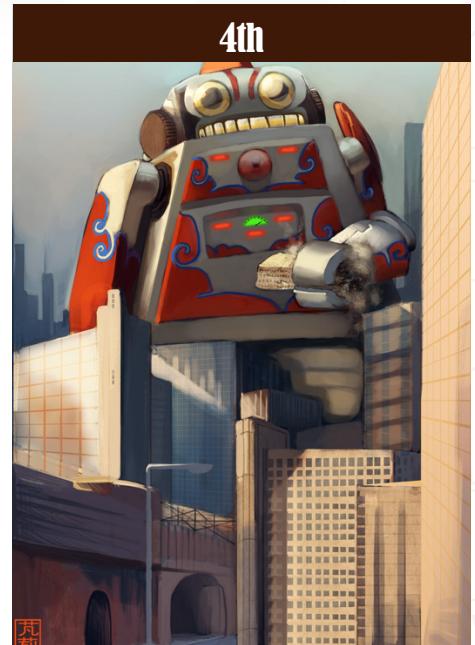
Funny and humorous entries which break the theme down to its most recognisable components; emphasise these in whichever ways you think best, and render your stylised / abstract / cartoon masterpiece. The rules are pretty laid back: please submit 1 x 3D render (minor post work is OK); its up to you if you want to have a background; include some graphical elements or text on your image. Renders of the 800 pixel dimension sound about right, but the winners will be featured in 2DArtist Magazine, so if you can create some higher res images too then all the better!

6th

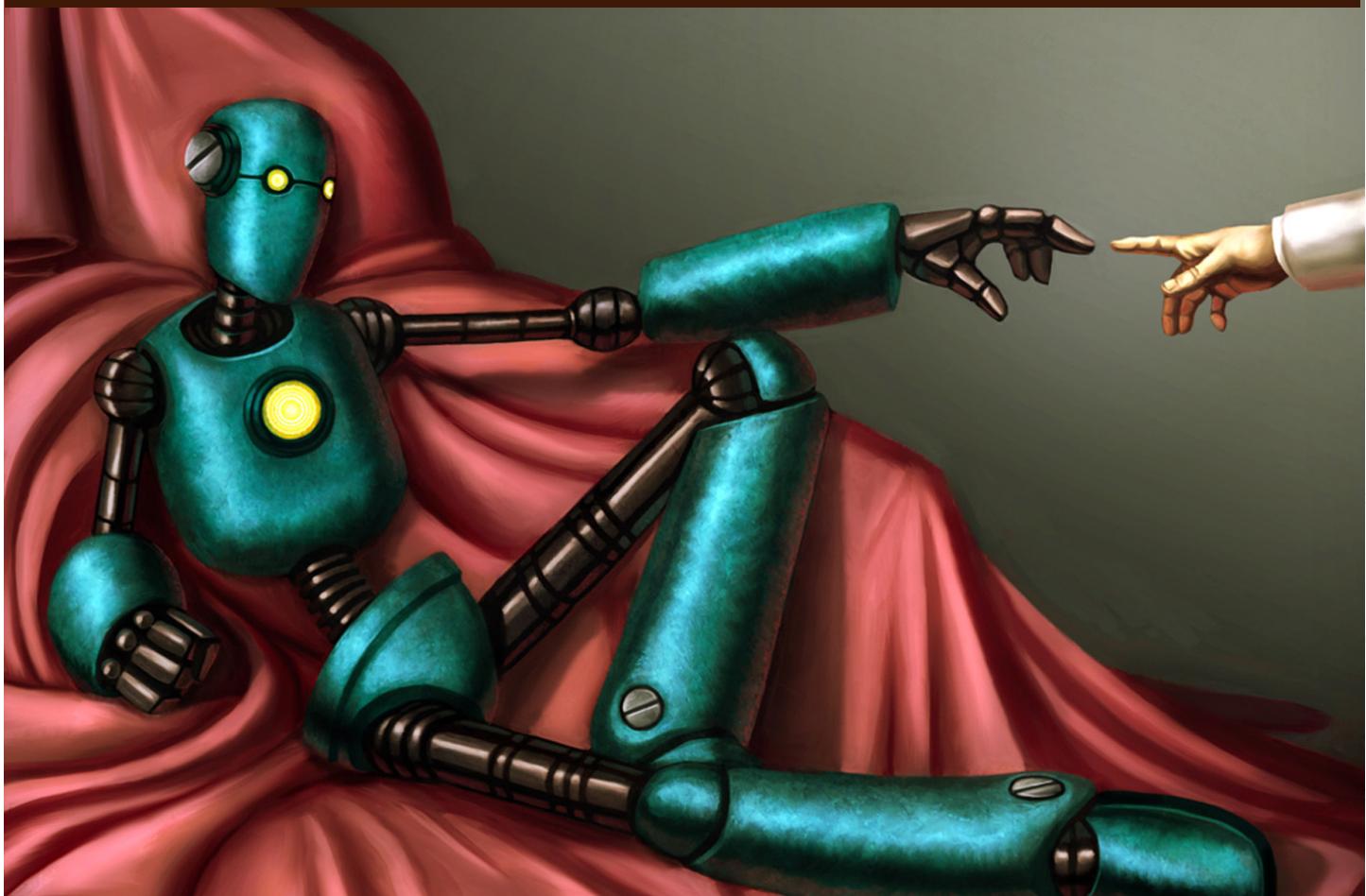
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Monstertree

3rd

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2ndModel: **Tiq Taq-1901****Richard G.D. Baker - The Antarctican**cirqus@cirqus.com
<http://www.cirqus.com>

There will be one competition per month, with the deadline being the end of the month (GMT). For a valid entry, just make sure your final image is posted in the main competition thread before the deadline. We require the top three winners to submit "Making Of" overview articles that will be shown on either 3DTotal or in 2DArtist Magazine. These need to show the stages of your creation - different elements and some brief explanation text - of why, and how, you did what you did. We will format this into some nice-looking pages to give you some great exposure, and us some quality content. Each competition will have one main thread which starts with the brief at the top. All entrants should post all WIP's, give feedback

and generally laugh at the crazy ideas that are emerging each month...

Challenge Thread

The entire **Robot** competition can be viewed [Here](#)

The current challenge at the voting stage is:
Amazon Woman Warrior

To join the next challenge, or to view previous, and / or current entries, please visit: [www.conceptart.org](#)

Or contact: Lynette@3dtotal.com

1stJan 2005
05**János Kiss - 28th Wing**janos.kiss@28thwing.com
<http://www.28thwing.com>



Making Of's

Here are the "Making Of's" from last month's top three winning entries...

3rd Rvdtor

Software Used: Photoshop

Well this is my third time participating in the Super Stylised Challenge on ConceptArt.org. Just a little introduction: my name is Arvid Torres and I'm from Belize in Central America. While studying at art school, currently doing multimedia and animation art, I decided to take it upon myself to study digital painting and illustration on my own. Anyway, this was my third attempt at the stylised challenge – the first two being the Centaur and my unfinished Bigfoot. And now I have the chance to write a making of for the Jester!

My normal way of sketching and rendering is to do very rough sketches, and then below that add the black and white values very roughly. On another layer above those two I then refine the shadows and values in black and white before I



Fig.01

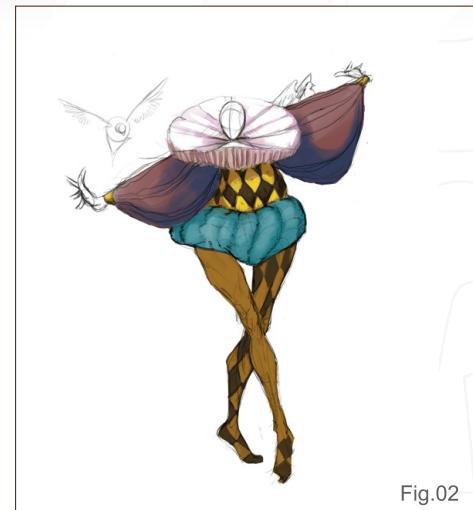


Fig.02

proceed to add colour. However, I like to look at these challenges as a way of experimenting with different drawing and rendering methods. So this time around I decided to go on with straight colour – something I'm always very intimidated by. I tend to use lots of layers, trying to avoid mistakes and repainting.

Step 1

So I started off with a basic sketch where I already had an idea of what I wanted my jester to look like – a sort of semi-colourful palette but still a bit drab with an almost depressing atmosphere. So in the starting sketch I defined the basic motion kind of a "TA-DA!" pose, as if he'd just finished a magic trick (with doves, apparently). For the costume I wanted a big, puffy dress/pant thing set high up on the hips,

making him look very leggy, with big sleeves to counteract the long, thin legs and wide ruffles – just exaggerating the costume (Fig.01).

Step 2

Next I added basic flat colours under the line art, and I knew then that I wanted a chequer pattern in there somewhere (Fig.02). There are a lot of important things to remember when rendering, but the most important ones I think happen when starting to define shadows and shapes. Shapes are extremely important, in my opinion, and having them read instantly makes the image more captivating.

Step 3

In Fig.03 I defined the light source, which in turn would help shape everything else in terms of depth and composition. I had this idea of the jester in the centre of the spotlight and the shadows of people in the foreground and background with everyone clapping. I wanted to leave that for last and work on the jester first, but time was a big issue so I left the people out in the end.

Step 4

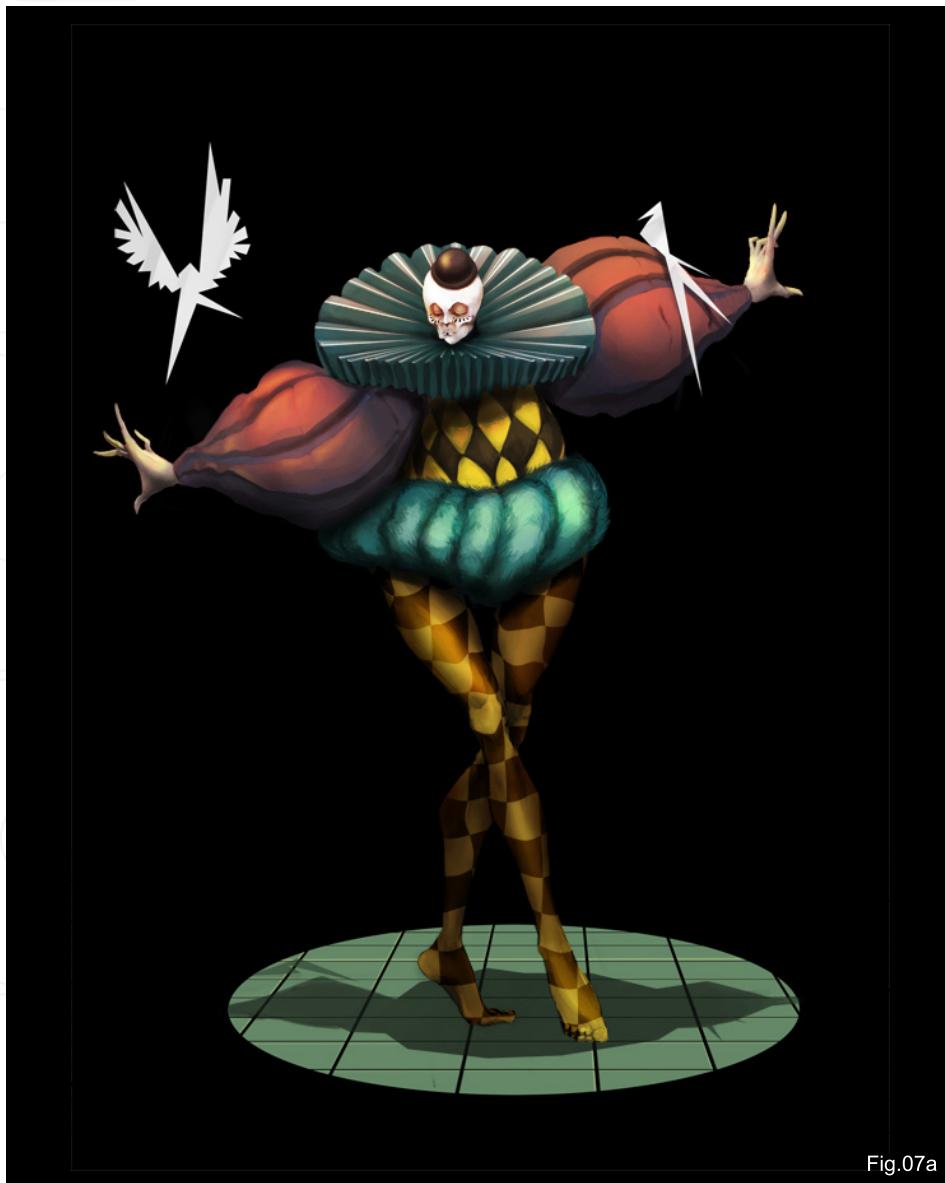
Anyway, moving on I kept refining the roundness in the sleeves and the shape of the legs using the colour palette I'd chosen, while mixing subtle colours from the nearby parts of the costume and always keeping in mind where the light was coming from (Fig.04).



Fig.03



Fig.04



Step 5

From this point it was basically just rendering and figuring out the type of texture I wanted on the puffy dress (almost a furry, silky material), ruffles (very stiff, almost paper-like material), and the sleeves (sort of a heavy velvet cloth), while at the same time phasing out the line art (Fig.05). After flipping the canvas a few times, which I do now and then because when looking at the same image it becomes harder and harder to see what I might be doing wrong, I changed the placement of the hands and their shape. The sleeves were looking a bit too flat so I rounded them a bit more and refined the head shape a little further.

Step 6

After a while I played with a chequered pattern which I made using the Liquify filter to shape it a bit more to the contours of the legs. I also changed the doves, giving them a more origami paper bird feel – I thought the sharp edges were a nice touch of contrast. Finally, I started working on the head and after a few hat sketches I liked the little bowler hat against the pale white, almost ghostly face. On the floor I also defined the tiles very quickly, not giving it too much time or attention (Fig.06).

Step 7

Once I was satisfied with how it looked overall I wanted to play around with some more colours and the overall atmosphere, sharpening





certain points on the character and adding a bit of luminance with darker shadows. I played around with layers (Overlay, Color Burn, and Color Dodge), changed the colour of the ruffles, brightened certain parts of the dress and legs, and added colours on the face to get rid of some of the flatness (Fig.07a – 07b).

Final

To wrap things up it was just a matter of final touches to the shadow, making it slightly darker, and my jester was complete (Fig.08).

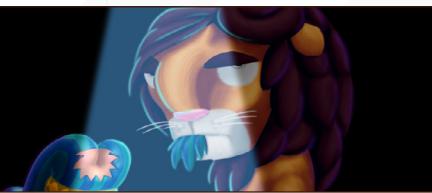
Arvid Torres

For more work by this artist please contact them at:

jagon_eye@hotmail.com

–APN 7/09

Fig.08



1st Rosatron

Software Used: Photoshop

When I'm trying to come up with ideas I find it helps to think about what I'd like to get out of the final product. For this challenge I wanted an interesting pose, something sort of funny and cartoony for the jester topic. I initially pictured him with an idiotic face, but then when I thought about it, pulling a stupid face isn't funny unless it's in context. And then when I thought over a few situations I found funny, it wasn't about the character trying to be funny, but more that he was trying to be taken seriously in a funny situation. These thoughts eventually swirled into my final idea, of a jester being involved in an act that goes wrong.

Step 1

I created a high-res canvas in Photoshop and zoomed out until it was a small square on my screen. I always like to start off with a thumbnail sketch to sweep in the line of action and basic shapes. When it starts to get too messy I lower the layer's opacity and start on a new one to refine it. I find it handy to build up sketches on layers so I don't lose the basic thrust when I continue to add details (**Fig.01**).



Fig.01



Fig.02



Fig.03

Step 2

I blew the canvas up so it filled the screen and started refining the sketch. I'm still not set in a particular style and I'm constantly being influenced by other artists. I've been reading a lot of Enrique Fernandez's comics lately (<http://enriquefernandez0.blogspot.com>), and my lion's stylisation was greatly inspired by his designs. His rendering is also very solid. Though cartoony, the form is defined without line art. To capture this form in my sketch I minimised my Hard Round brush to 1 pixel in size and started

hatching in the shapes. This was especially helpful with the lion's mane, for I realised I liked the silhouette but had no idea how to break it up (**Fig.02**).

Step 3

With my line finalised I went in and laid down my flat colour. With only my clean line art visible, I made sure Use All Layers was set on the Magic Wand and then selected a piece I wanted coloured. I grew my selection by a few pixels so

that when I filled it with a colour the jagged edge was hidden under the line art. I lay each hastily-chosen colour on a separate layer below my line art so I could Hue/Saturate adjust it later. I then experimented with a few colour palettes with my black outlines hidden so they didn't influence my colour choices. After getting something I liked, I locked the line work's transparent pixels and filled them to match their inner colours (**Fig.03**), using a method left over from the 2D animation colouring course I learnt Photoshop on.

Step 4

After flicking between the original sketch and flat colour style I realised that I'd worked on autopilot for half an hour and it wasn't the technique I wanted to use to render. So I hid my colour and started planning it out in greyscale. I used the default Hard Round brush to get my major tones in, using my sketchy hatching as a guide (Fig.04).



Fig.04

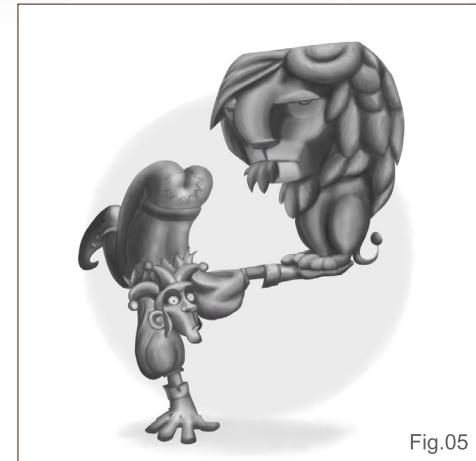


Fig.05

Step 5

I then used the Smudge tool to blend it together. A co-worker recommended a special brush for smudging, with a spatter Brush Tip Shape and the Scattering turned on low. She told me that the Smudge tool with a hard brush is not worth using as it just looks like an obvious and ugly smear. The interesting tip shape and scattering helped spread the colour in a softer but more textured way.

After this rough blend it was looking very gummy. I used a small, soft brush to start defining details and varying the size and opacity as I went along. To get the texture in the hair I used a spotty brush tip shape with the spacing down to 1%, giving the final brushstroke a streaky look. I duplicated my line work so I could still paint and blend on it, but still have another copy that I could flick on and off as a guide (Fig.05).



Fig.06



Fig.07

Step 6

After getting it to a decently rendered stage, I flicked on my original colour folder, set my blending mode to Color, and was horrified at the result (Fig.06).

Step 7

The colours looked awful, even when I mucked around with the hues. It was then that I realised the colours I had initially chosen had different values to the rendered tone I had ended up with. If I wanted to keep my

basic colours, I should've used a desaturated version of them as my base for rendering. To fix this I set a merged copy of my desaturated colour on the Soft Light blending mode, and got my new greyscale image (Fig.07).

Step 8

I then threw my colour (set to Color) over the top and saw that finally, my original colours were shining through. However, I was far from happy. The colours were still really boring and ugly, looking as if the tone had been achieved through Dodge and Burn. The shadows were the same hue as the flat, just with a bit more black in them (Fig.08).

Step 9

To fix this I merged the colour and greyscale together and used my original colour layers as a selection mask to Color Balance each piece as I saw fit. I did the lion's fur first, really disliking the green brown shadows and changing them more to magenta. I continued to go through each



Fig.08



Fig.09

piece, finally starting to see the picture I saw in my head starting to emerge. I added whiskers, a pattern to the belt, and a bit of pink set to Color on the jester's face. I did even more tweaking with the Levels to get a prettier result (Fig.09).

Final

A few days later I came back to it and thought it could use a bit more drama. So I changed the

background to black and added a blue spotlight set to Screen and a darker shadow over the unlit areas. I added a simple floor and some rim lighting to make it more interesting. After getting some feedback I pulled back the lighting a little (Fig.10), and in retrospect I probably should have been a bit more sparing instead of crazily putting it everywhere!

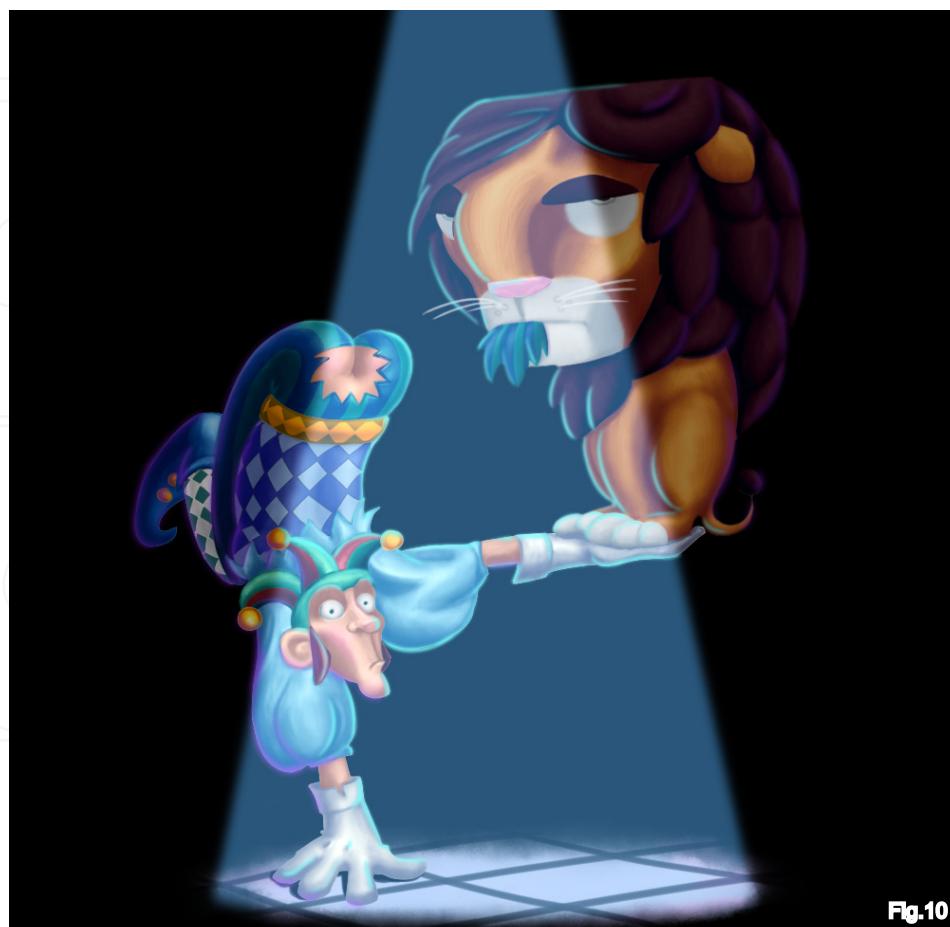


Fig.10

Looking back through my method I can see a lot of needless steps I went through. However, I learnt a lot as I went around in circles (from flat colour to rendered greyscale, to re-toned rendered greyscale based on my colour values, to rendered colour needing serious colour balance). This is the first time I've rendered in greyscale and I've got to admit I found it much easier to focus on the form this way. It took me a lot longer to get my colours right, but I think if I worked off a desaturated version of my planned flats to start with, I'd have reached the sort of colours I wanted quicker and with a lot more ease.

Rosa Hughes

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Using 3D as a Base for 2D Painting

This tutorial series will revolve around the use of 3d as a starting point for digital painting. In particular we will explore the value of Google SketchUp, a free program enabling users to quickly build 3d environments using a set of intuitive tools.

This technique is used by many contemporary artists and is used as a quick and effective way of establishing correct perspective as well as offering a moveable camera in order to experiment with compositions.

As a 3d package SketchUp is easy to learn and does not require hours of training and as an artist wishing to draw complicated scenes, this approach can prove a valuable starting point for producing a template on which to paint over.

Using 3D as a Base for 2D Painting

Part 1:

2d
artist

Using Google SketchUp as a Base for Digital Painting

Why use SketchUp?

Google SketchUp is a free programme enabling users to quickly and effectively build 3D environments using a number of intuitive tools. Unlike most 3D packages it is very easy to learn and does not require hours of training before decent results are achievable. It is very versatile and with regards to digital painting can prove an invaluable tool in swiftly establishing a correct perspective, as well as offering a moveable camera in order to experiment with alternative viewpoints and compositions.

An object can be made and then duplicated any number of times, so if a structural element is repeated throughout your concept then this package can quickly and accurately create such arrays. It also has a simple-to-use lighting system that enables placement of the sun according to the month and time of day by way of slider bars, thus determining physically correct shadows that can be turned on or off at the click of a button. These functions mean that as an artist wishing to draw detailed or tricky scenes, one can use SketchUp as a valuable starting point to establish a "guide template" on which to paint over.

Installation

In order to install SketchUp, click on the link below and go to Downloads on the left hand menu. Select the free version which is currently version

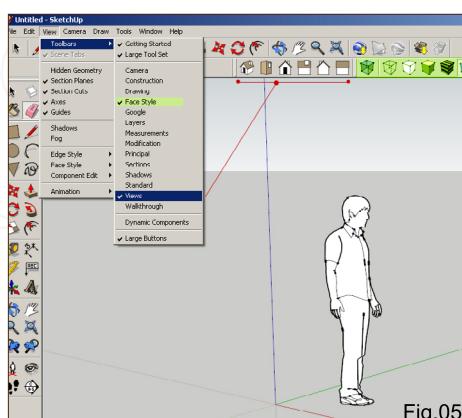


Fig.05

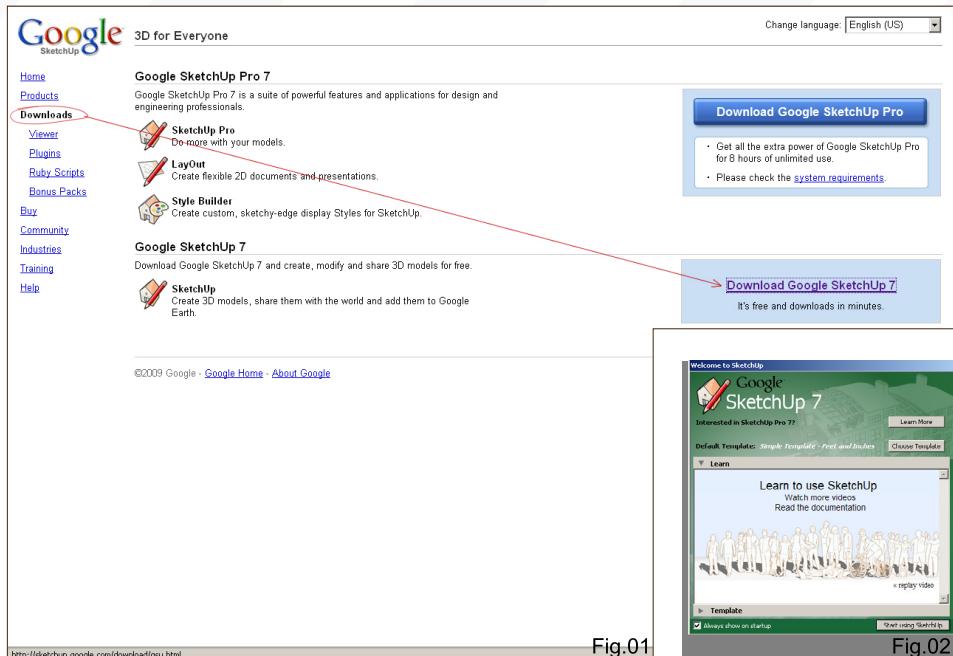


Fig.01



Fig.02

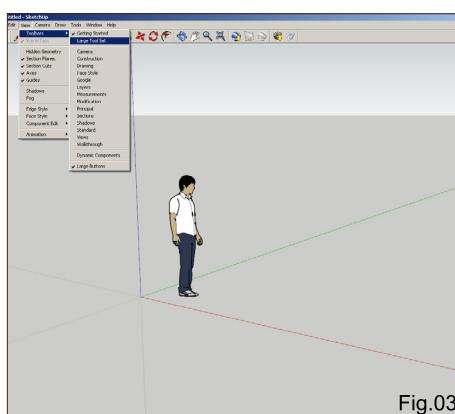


Fig.03

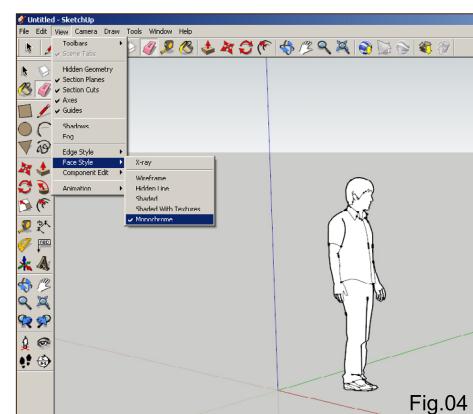


Fig.04

7 (Fig.01). Choose your operating system and then follow the instructions.

<http://sketchup.google.com/>

Once installed, click on the application shortcut and you will be prompted with the following dialogue box in which you are asked to choose a template (Fig.02). The scale and type of your scene will determine which you choose, but for the purposes of this tutorial we will select **Architectural Design – Feet and Inches**.

Toolbars & Menus

When SketchUp starts you will see a screen resembling Fig.03. From the main menu click on View > Toolbars > Large Tool Set; this will access more tools which will appear down the left margin. To change the display mode of the

objects in the scene click on View > Face Style; this will show a number of options, as seen in Fig.04.

If you also check Views under View > Toolbars you will see six small house icons appear below your toolbar (Fig.05). These will provide quick access to orthographic views, as well as isometric. You will notice that I have also checked Face Style in the list (highlighted in green), which has added some cube icons to represent the display modes.

This is basically where you can customise your workspace and add toolsets to speed up your workflow. For additional help go to Window > Instructor; this will open a window providing useful information on whichever tool you have currently selected.



Fig.06

Basic Navigation

The key orientation tools you will use to navigate in your scene are Orbit, Pan and Zoom, which you will find on the top toolbar and whose shortcut keys are represented by O (Orbit), H (Pan) and Z (zoom). These can be seen in **Fig.06**.

The main tools used to directly manipulate your objects are Move (M), Rotate (Q) and Scale (S). The Scale tool appears on the left hand toolbar which you will see highlighted if you press S on your keyboard.

Drawing Shapes

One way of using SketchUp is to create two-dimensional shapes from which you can extrude three-dimensional objects. Select the top view and then the Line tool (**Fig.07**) and left-click in the viewport to begin drawing. You will notice that as you do so, the points will snap to the green and red axes, thus easily enabling the creation of right-angled structures.

When you finally close the shape by clicking on the initial point you will notice the shape turns blue, indicating a surface has been made; once a shape has become closed you can still edit it, however. Using the Line tool, add an internal rectangle (see top diagram in **Fig.08**). To now make this edge become part of the exterior shape click on the Eraser tool and then on the outside edge shown in red.

You can continue to cut into your shape or alternatively extend it outwards and then erase the necessary lines by using the Line tool (**Fig.09**). Here I have added a walkway and also a curved section using the Arc tool. You can also draw more organic shapes using the Freehand tool (**Fig.10**).

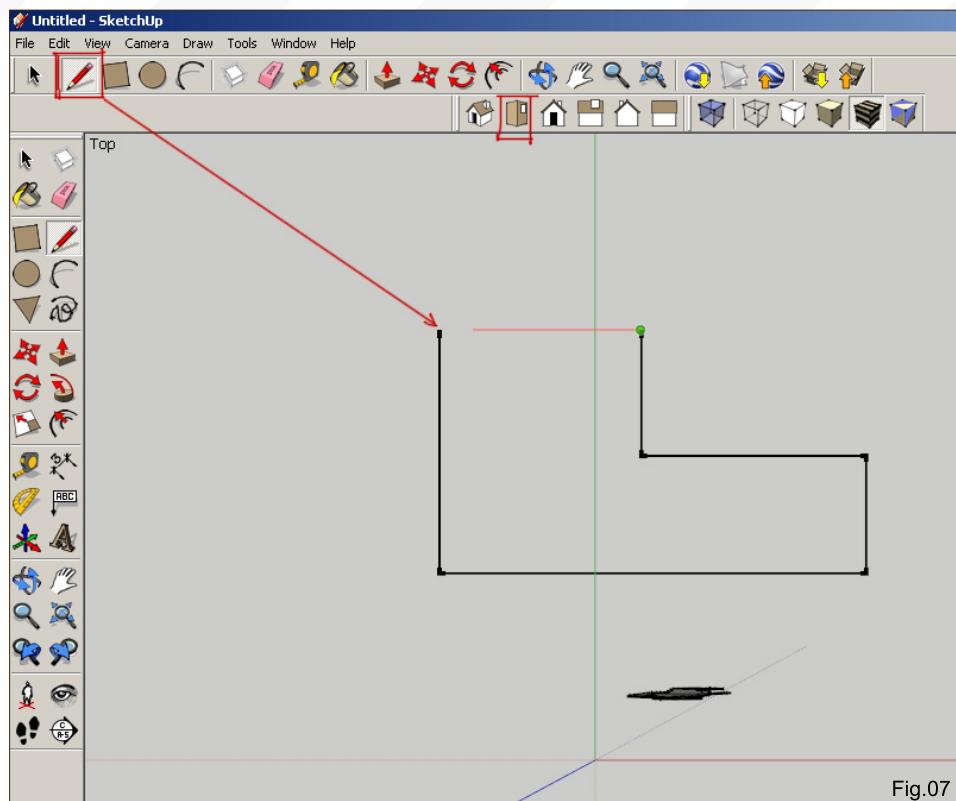


Fig.07

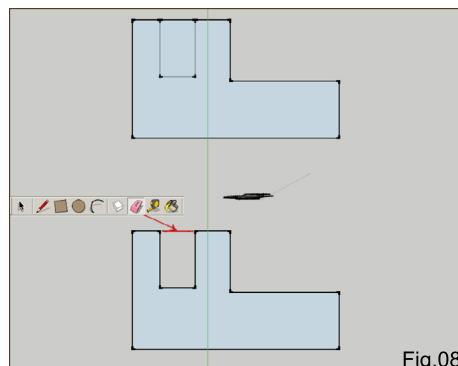


Fig.08

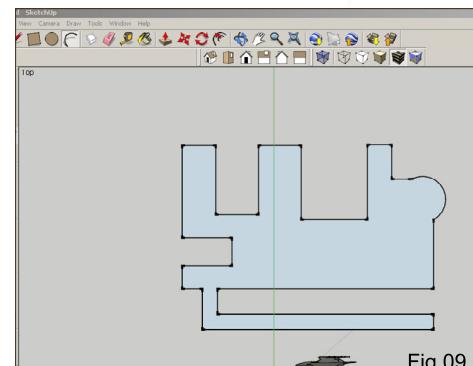


Fig.09

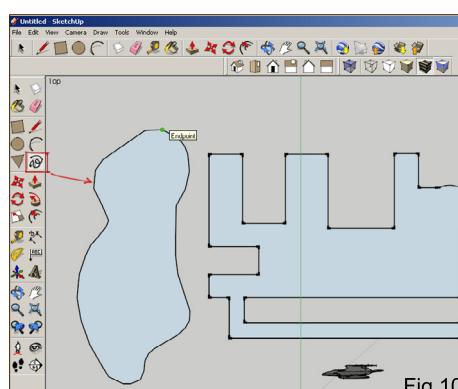


Fig.10

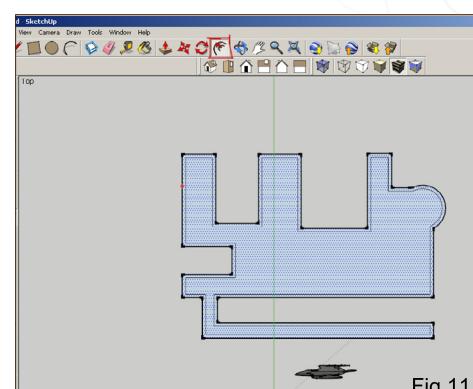


Fig.11

One other useful function, especially for architectural structures, is the Offset tool which is situated next to the Rotate tool. This enables a shape to be duplicated in order to create depth – perfect for drawing walls in a building, for example (**Fig.11**).

With an exterior wall depth, click on the large internal shape using the Select tool (black arrow on Toolbar) and hit delete. You can then select the Push/Pull tool and then click on the wall and raise it vertically (**Fig.12**). You will notice I have edited the section where the walkway adjoins

Using 3D as a Base for 2D Painting

Part 1:

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artist

the building using the Line and Eraser tools so that this was not raised along with the outer wall.

Three Dimensions

When a shape has been converted into 3D it can be edited further by using a combination of the Line and Push/Pull tools. If you move the Line tool along an edge it will snap to the midpoint between opposing edges (Fig.13). You can then make equally spaced cuts, as shown. These new shapes can be pushed inward or pulled outward, or alternatively a new shape can be drawn and this can then be manipulated.

In Fig.14 I have used the Offset tool to create a window shape in the far left rectangle. To create the same proportioned window in the other sections simply select the Offset tool and double-click in each rectangle. To create the arches use the Arc tool and then erase the horizontal join shown by the dotted line. To create windows use the Push/Pull tool to move the shapes inwards beyond the inner wall surface or until they disappear.

Using a combination of the tools mentioned so far you will have the means through which to create and edit a wide range of forms and design detailed scenes.

Atmospherics & Lighting

You can add atmospheric perspective in the form of fog to your scene. Go to View and check Fog, as seen in Fig.15. You will notice that the

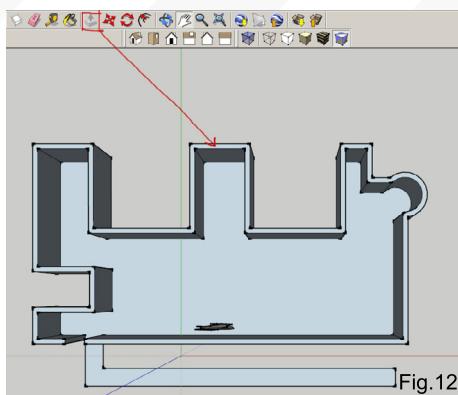


Fig.12

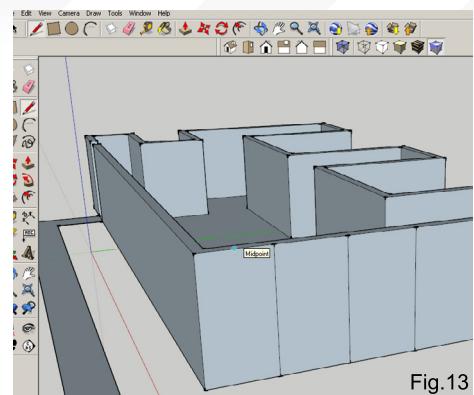


Fig.13

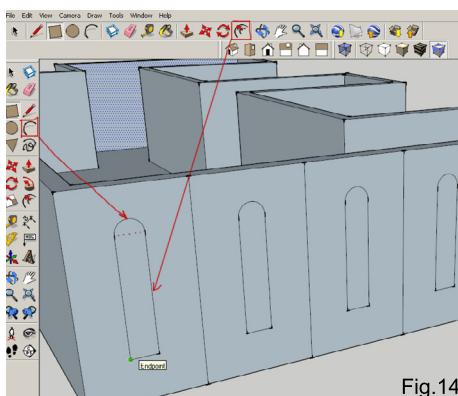


Fig.14

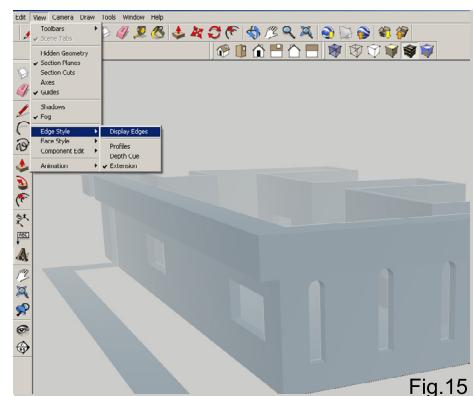


Fig.15

edges on my building have also been switched off, which you can control in the menu under Edge Style > Display Edges.

To add lighting effects check Shadows which is above the Fog label, and to get more control over this function go to View > Toolbars > Shadows. This will place two slider bars on your toolbar which denote the month and time of day. By adjusting these you can control the position of the sun and direction of the shadows (Fig.16). There is a little icon to switch the lighting on or off, and besides this there is also another icon

which opens up some extra parameters that alter the tonal range of the shading. You can also control whether this affects just the object itself or the ground along with it and vice versa.

Additional Tools

A few other useful tools worth mentioning are the Tape Measure, Protractor and Dimension. The Tape Measure is used to draw guidelines which can then be traced over with the Line tool. In Fig.17 you can see that the tape measure has created the dotted lines which can be used as a guide to draw the windows an equal dis-

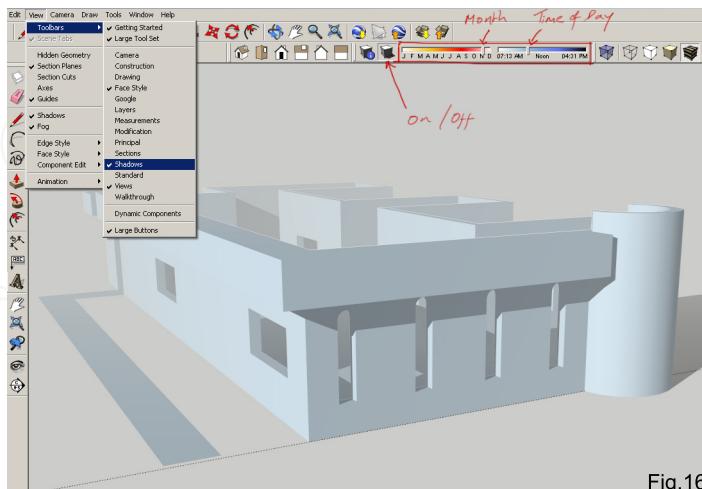


Fig.16

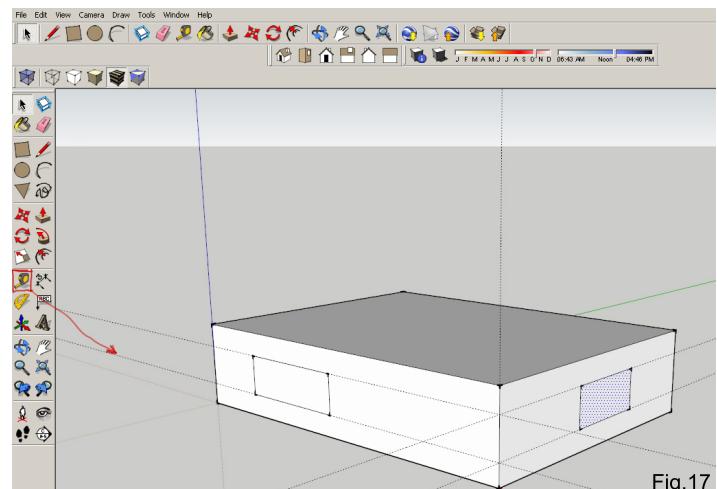


Fig.17

tance from the top and bottom of the block. To delete the lines simply use the Eraser tool. The Protractor is used to create accurate angles. Move the tool to the point at which you wish to start the angle and you will see how it snaps to the three axes. Click to establish the correct plane and then click to begin the angle along the appropriate edge. Now you can set the angle using the guideline. In **Fig.18** I have used the near corner as the starting point, which I will mirror on the opposite corner.

Once the guidelines are drawn, trace them using the Line tool, as with the Tape Measure. In **Fig.19** you can see that the two angles have been drawn and then the Push/Pull tool was used to extrude a roof shape across the base block.

The Dimension tool simply adds a label to your scene, showing the distance between two points. Click and drag from A to B and then drag up or down to set your dimensions, once again using the Eraser tool to delete when necessary (**Fig.20**).

Cameras

The camera in SketchUp is initially placed at an average eye level height, so for example when you click on the Position Camera tool it will zoom in and appear around head height from the ground. In this sense scale is an important factor in your scene.

In **Fig.21** you can see a cross where I intend to position the camera, after which the viewpoint will resemble the inset image. The character has been placed in the scene to demonstrate the relationship between the scale of a character and the initial camera height. To adjust your camera, use the Look Around tool represented by the eye icon.

One final tool which may prove useful is the Section Plane tool which allows a view of a cross-section of your object. To use this click on the tool and then align the green icon to the

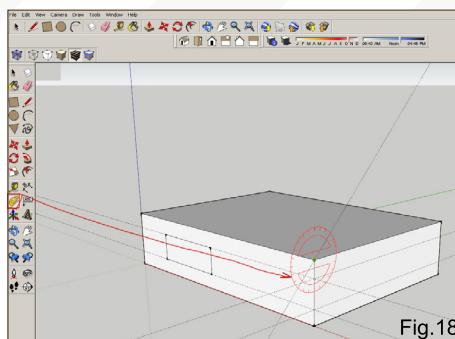


Fig.18

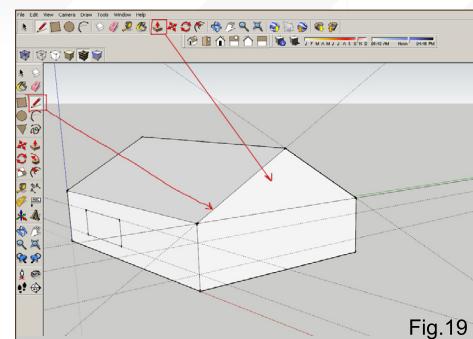


Fig.19

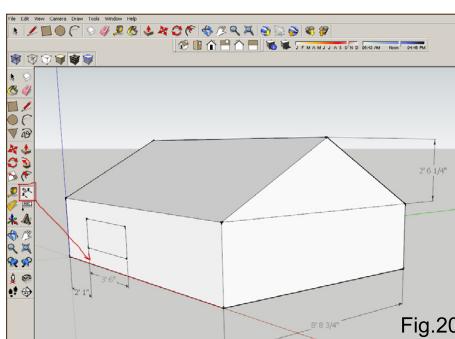


Fig.20

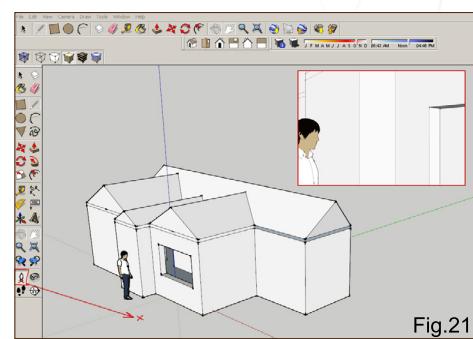


Fig.21

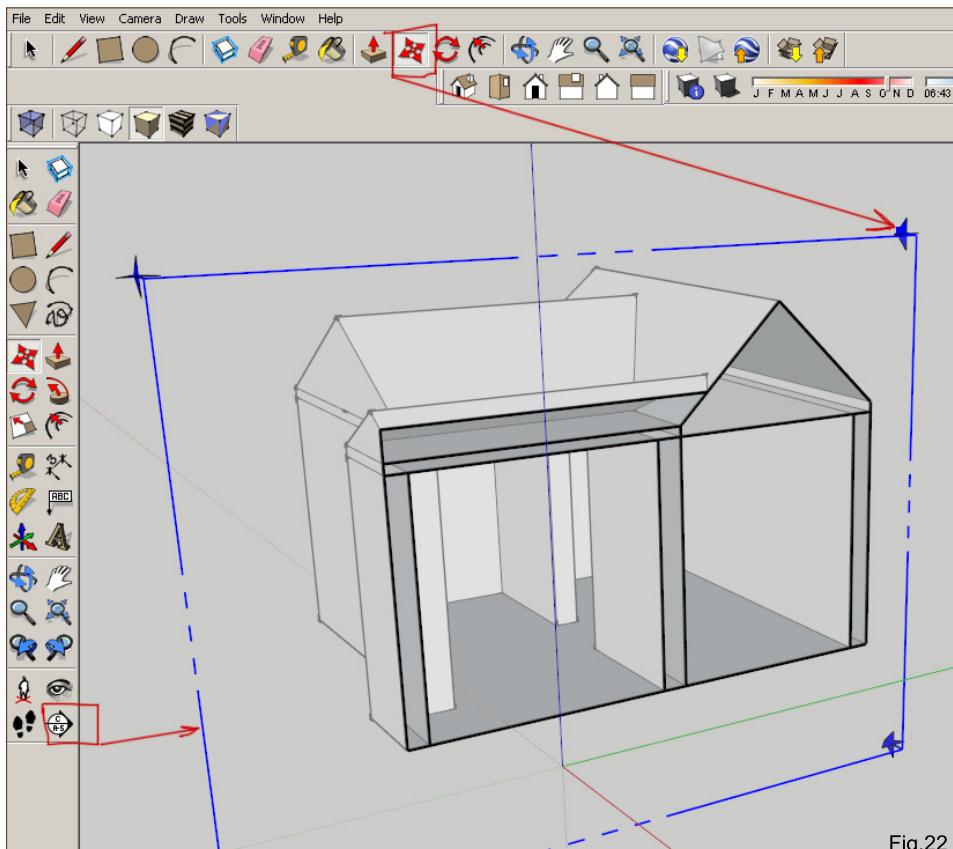


Fig.22

corresponding plane or angle you wish to view. Then select the Move tool and click on one of the corner arrows and drag in the relevant direction (**Fig.22**).

This concludes our overview which I hope has at least introduced the main tools and their

functions. There are of course further lessons to learn along with other tools and techniques, such as applying materials, but the main aim here is to introduce the interface and value of the software in terms of building a simple 3D environment which can then be used in digital painting.

Using 3D as a Base for 2D Painting

Created In:

Google SketchUp and Photoshop

Introduction

The painting that forms the core of this tutorial will begin its life as a 3D environment within the free version of Google SketchUp. This programme is a very intuitive and simple 3D modelling package that uses a limited number of practical tools.

The 3D scene will then be used as a template within Photoshop to create the final painting. As such the scene will already integrate accurate perspective and also enable the addition of lighting effects which can prove useful when using complex forms.

The final image will culminate in a digital painting, but will retain the above aspects as

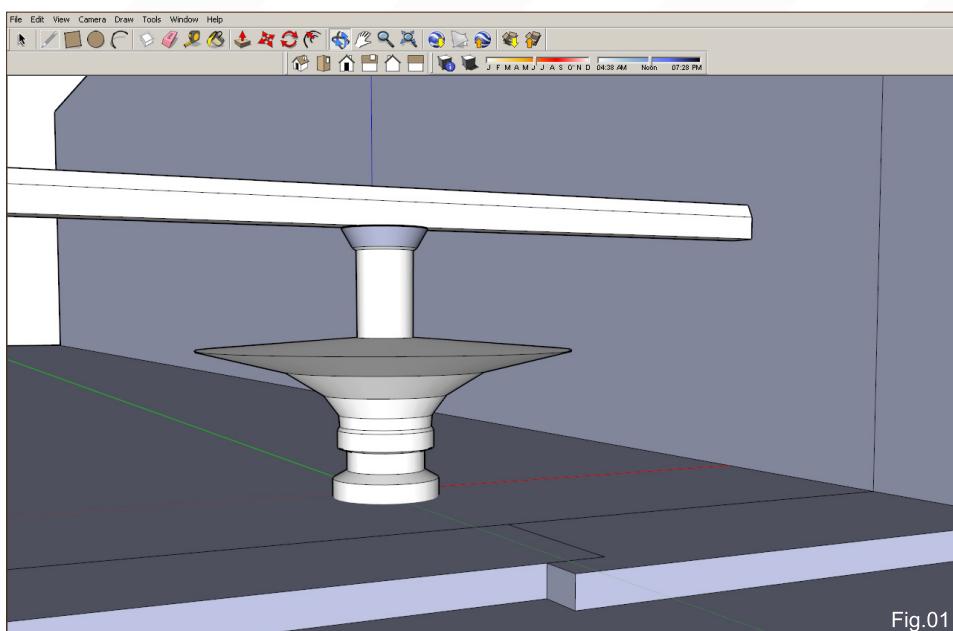


Fig.01

part of its structure and hence show how simple 3D can be incorporated into a 2D process.

Concept

The first stage involves conceiving an idea behind the image and establishing a composition. Because we are using a 3D scene, we have the advantage of a camera which means that a final composition does not necessarily need to be decided early on. Once

the scene is built the camera can be moved in order to experiment with the most suitable vantage point.

For this concept I want to create a scene on a large scale, utilising atmospheric perspective with repeatable shapes and thus help emphasize the value of using 3D. I pictured a vast chamber or hangar of some kind in which large scale structures would sit and form congregational areas. I imagined them as either assembly points or maybe even areas to set up market stalls akin to a futuristic bazaar.

Google SketchUp

With a vague notion in mind I begin drawing shapes and pulling out forms in SketchUp. Because the software enables a quick and effective way of modelling it is perfect for experimenting with simple forms. I build the main chamber using boxes and then use the Circle tool to create a cylinder. Using the Select tool I then highlight certain edges, and then by holding down Ctrl with the Move tool I add new lines/subdivisions. I then scale these to form the umbrella shape seen in Fig.01.

I decide to include some elevated walkways which will span the chamber at intervals. These are initially made using the Rectangle tool and

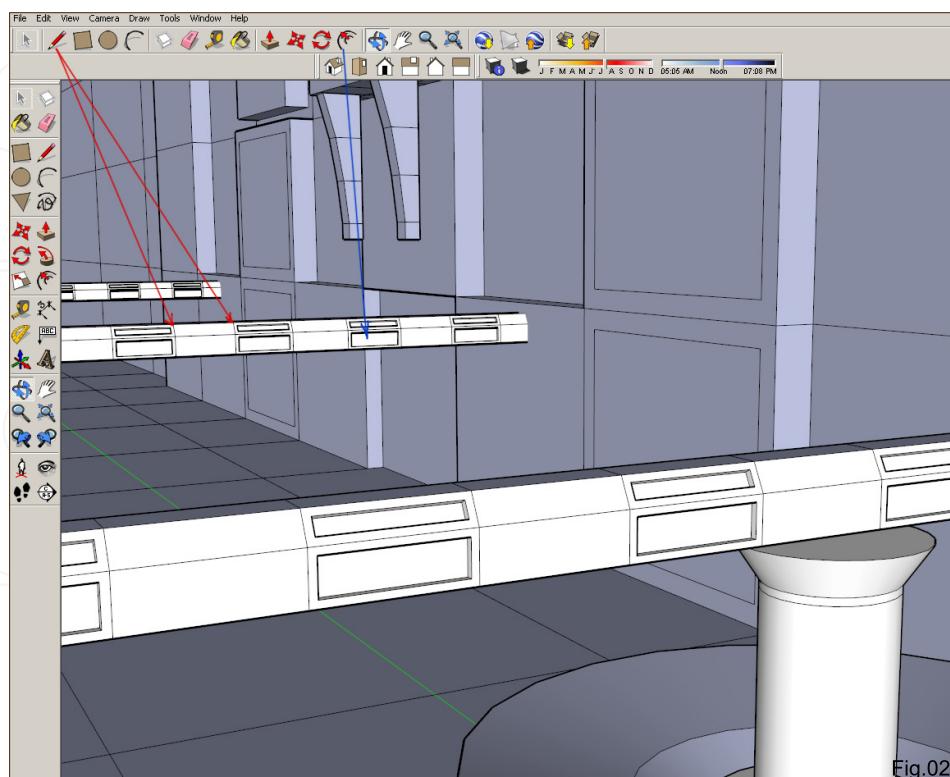


Fig.02

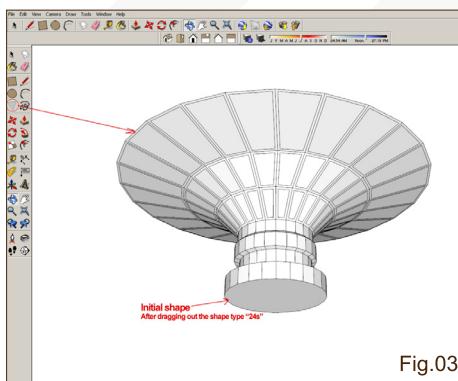


Fig.03

then I use the Line tool snapped to midpoints to divide the shape evenly (red arrow **Fig.02**). The windows are created by way of the Offset tool (blue arrow) and to ensure each are exactly the same proportion I simply double-click in the next section after creating the initial offset. I then use the Push/Pull tool to inset them using the same method of double-clicking to maintain consistency.

To create an “umbrella” which I can manipulate means re-building it using the Polygon tool, as SketchUp does not allow the pushing/pulling of smoothed or curved surfaces. I need a shape with 24 segments and to do this I type the number of sides followed by the letter S after dragging out the initial shape (**Fig.03**).

To add some interesting shadows and also accentuate the perspective I suspend a grid above the scene to resemble the framework of a yet unfinished structure (**Fig.04**). To create an evenly spaced network I make the first box

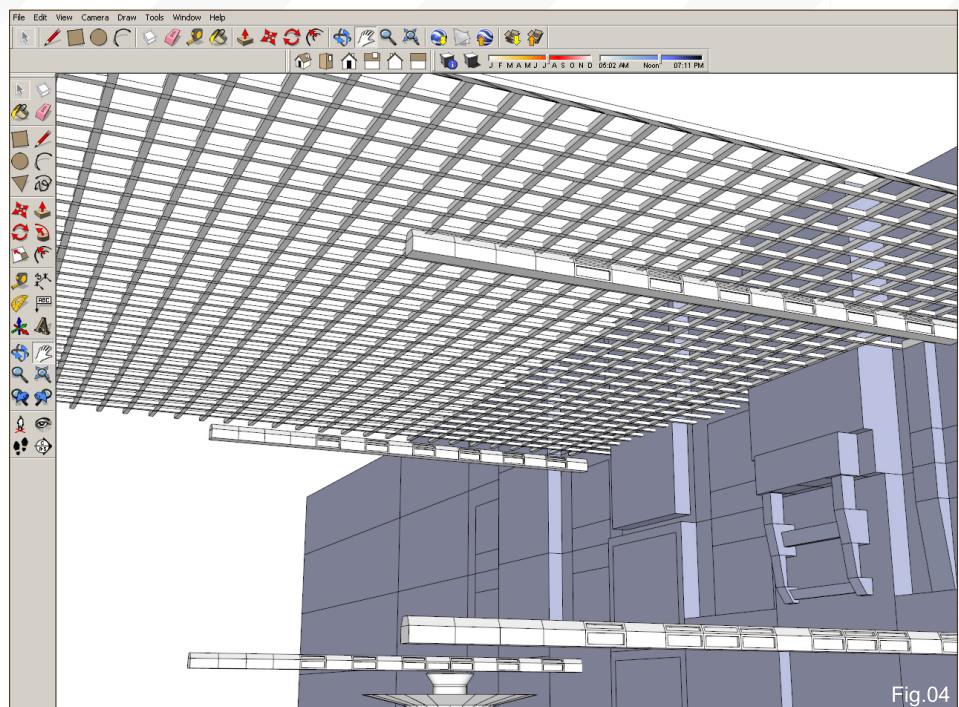


Fig.04

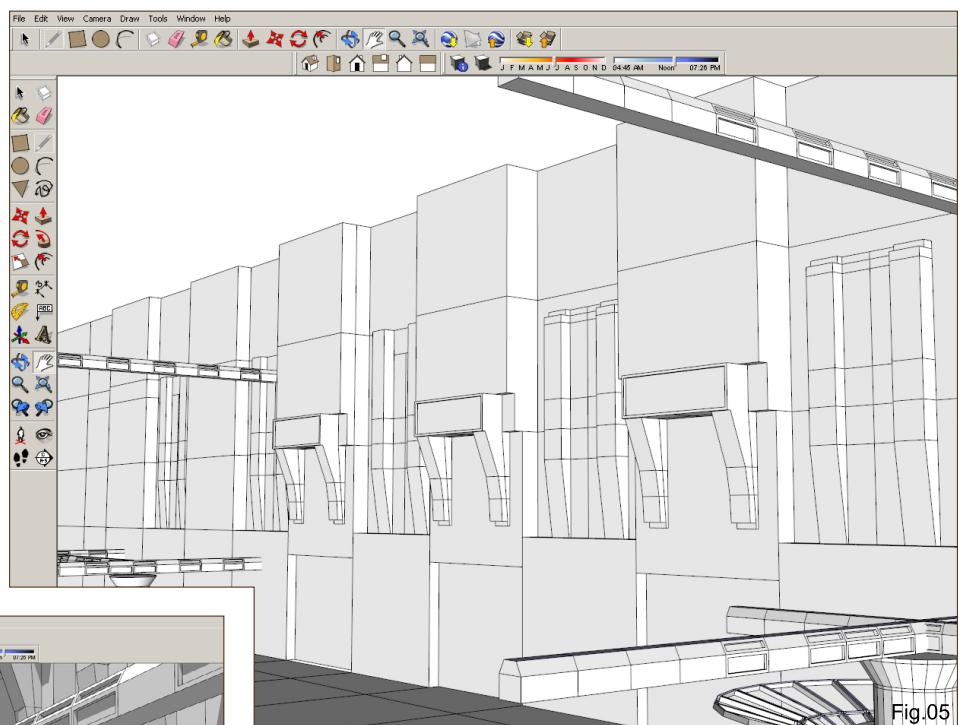


Fig.05

and duplicate it (hold down Ctrl + Move/Copy tool); once copied I type in a distance. You can repeat this process to add further pieces.

Using a combination of the Line and Push/Pull tools I add some detail and balconies to the main wall (**Fig.05**).

Fig.06 shows the final scene with the inclusion of shading. The umbrella frame was made using the Offset tool, as done with the walkways, and then deleting the inner polygons before pulling out the framework. The dialogue box for the lighting (inset) shows the four slider bars which

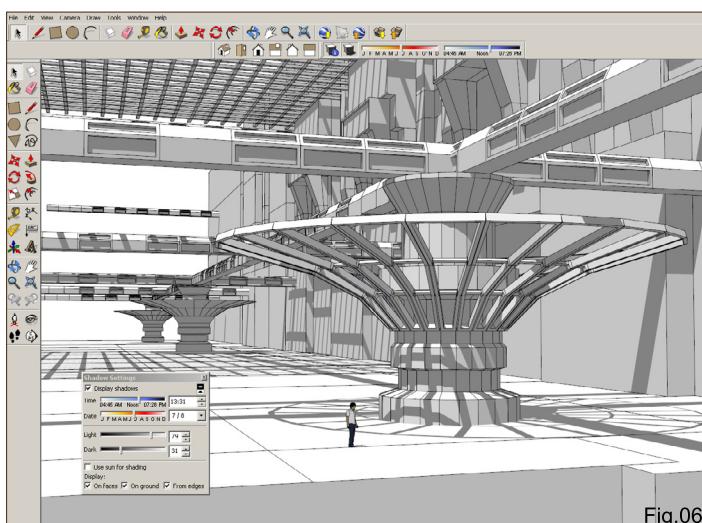


Fig.06

Using 3D as a Base for 2D Painting

Part 1:

2d
artist

correspond to the month, time of day, as well as the tonal range of the lighting.

Painting

Once your scene is complete and you have the camera in the desired position, screen-grab your image and then open it in Photoshop. Here you will need to re-size it according to your needs before beginning any of the painting.

I alter the lighting settings in order to save out the shadows as a separate render (Fig.07). By applying a black colour to the geometry and hiding certain elements it is also possible to save out masks, as seen in the right column.

With the numerous renders saved, I begin by adding in some brushwork and colour overlay to try and establish the overall lighting and mood (Fig.08). You can see here that the main scene is overlaid across the image to act as a guide.

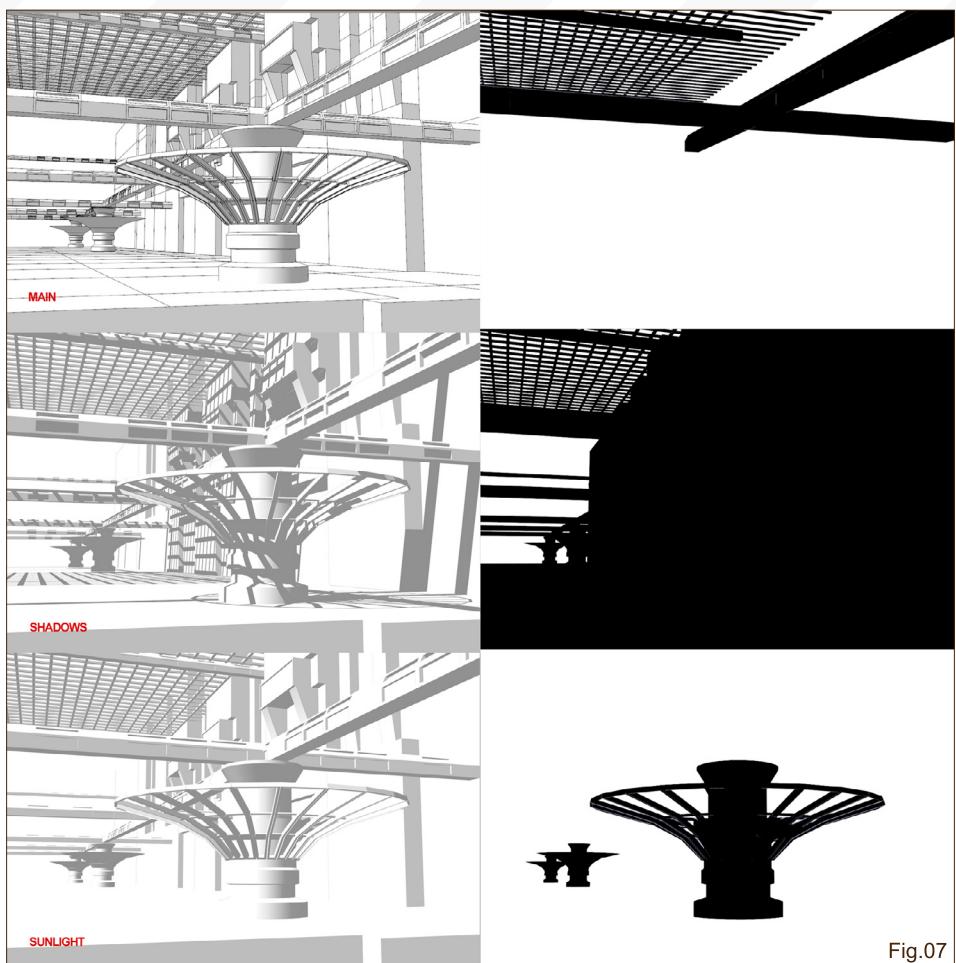
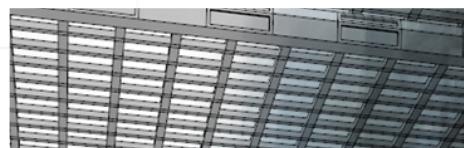


Fig.07

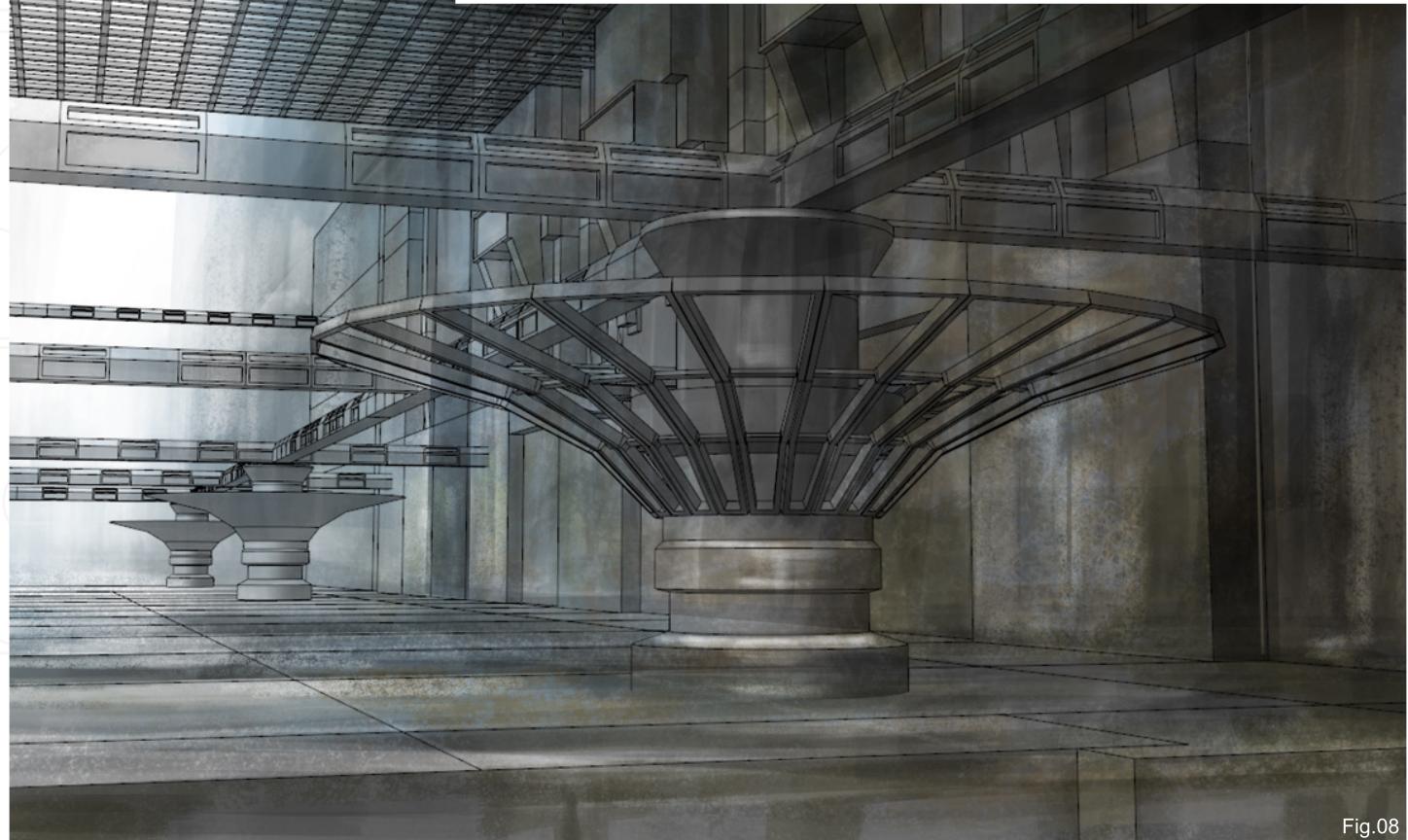


Fig.08



Part 1: Using 3D as a Base for 2D Painting

I organise the file in a way that enables me to easily edit it and make changes later on using certain layers set at specific blending modes (Fig.09). This way I can distinguish the colour from the lighting and allow it to be altered independently with ease.

Fig.10 shows the image with the shadow and sunlight layers visible. I also add some sunlight streaming in above the framework which uses a Layer Style (Fig.11).

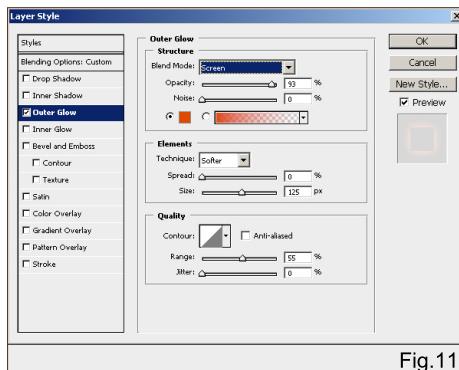


Fig.11

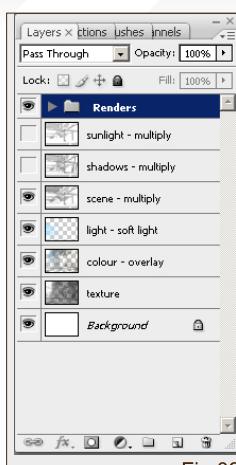


Fig.09

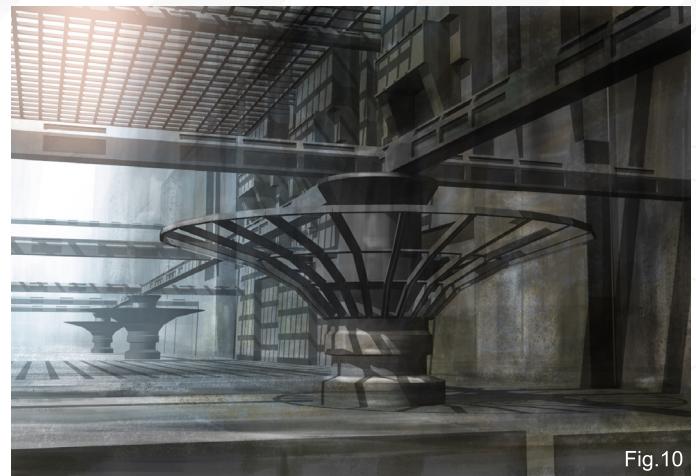


Fig.10

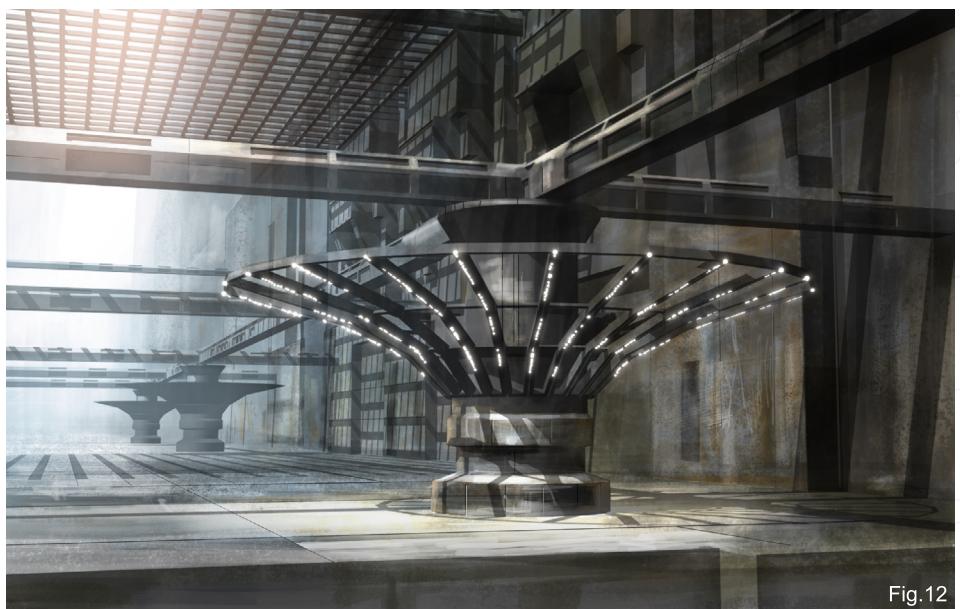


Fig.12

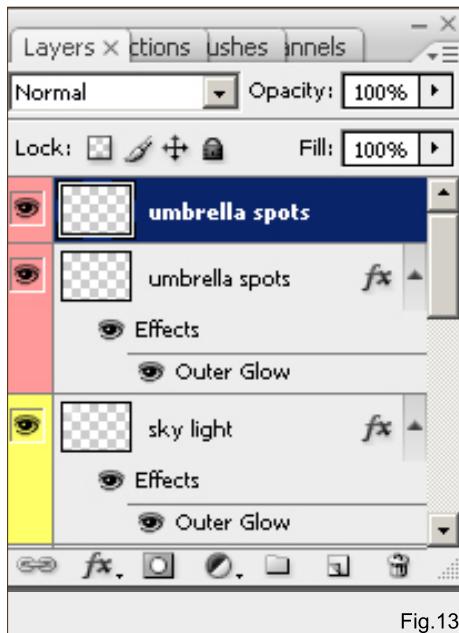


Fig.13

I decide to add some lights along the underside of the umbrella which are placed on a new layer at the top of my file. I then add an Outer Glow, as with the sky light, and then duplicate the layer, first removing the copied glow and instead apply some Gaussian Blur to enhance the glow even more (Fig.12 – 13).

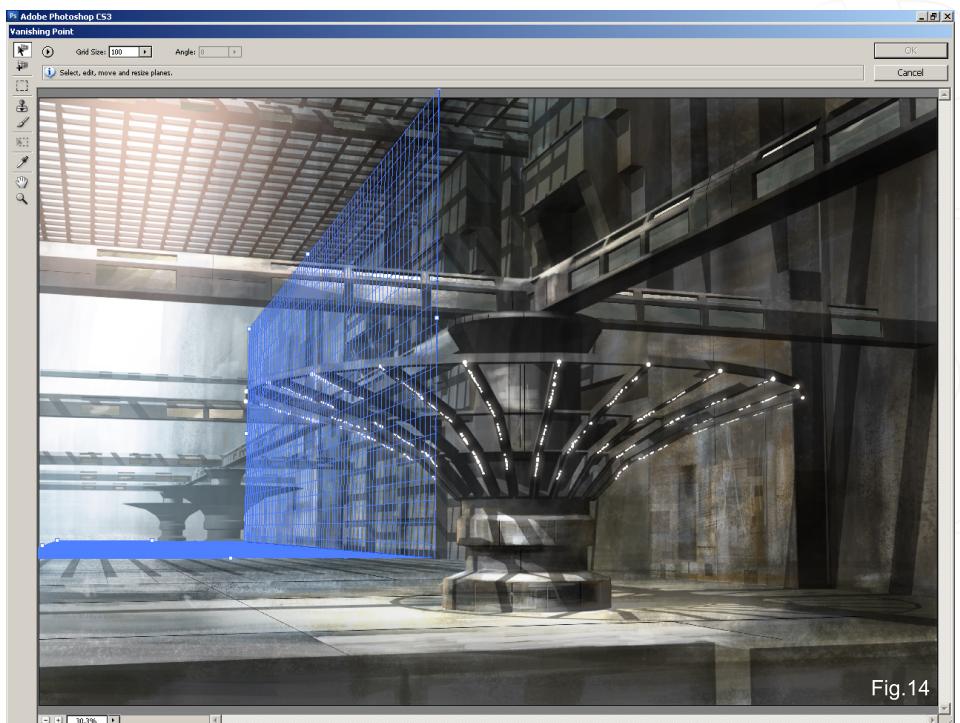


Fig.14

Using 3D as a Base for 2D Painting

Part 1:

2d
artist

To reflect this I paint in a pool of light on the ground below, which I blur and set to Overlay. To create some variation across the floor and wall I create a small image of randomly sized rectangles in slightly different colours. To align these with the perspective I use the Vanishing Point Filter (Fig.14). Once pasted in they can be moved, scaled and duplicated as needs be.

In Fig.15 you can see the subtle patchwork that extends along the wall which helps break up the surface somewhat. I have also placed some illuminated windows in the scene using the same technique.

The same panels can be used on the main stem of the umbrella; however, they will need to be skewed to fit with the perspective. This can be done by going to Edit > Transform > Warp. In



Fig.16

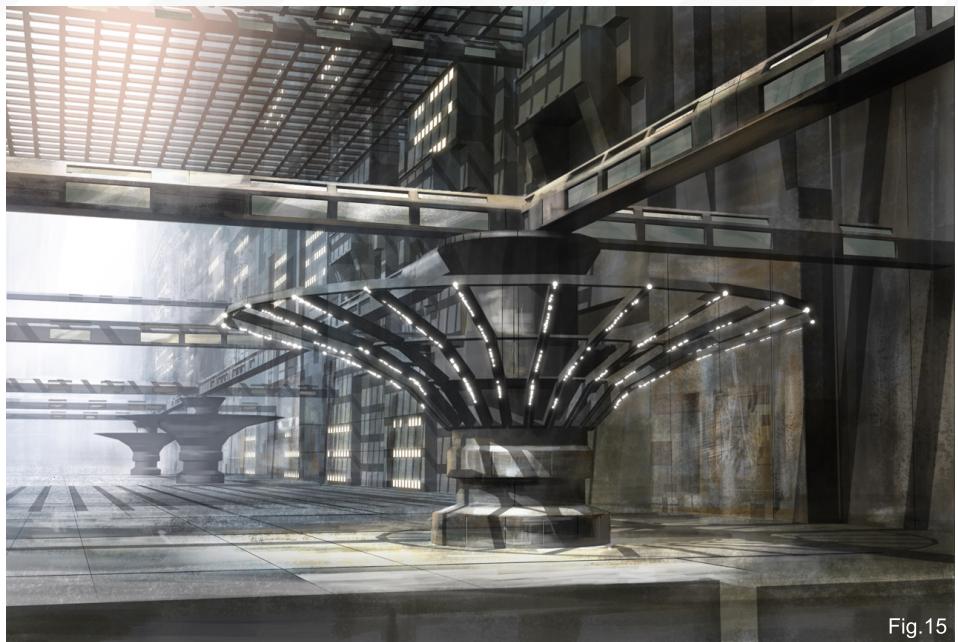


Fig.15



Fig.17

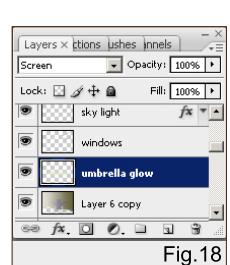


Fig.18



Fig.19

Fig.16 you can see the grid that appears along with the Bezier handles used to manipulate the image.

The glow at the foot of the umbrella certainly helped, but the lights themselves do not seem intense enough to throw out such a pool, so in order to fix the problem I add a new layer and paint in a soft green area surrounding the bulbs (Fig.17 – 18). Once blurred and set to Screen blending mode it makes a big difference, and to further the cause I also add a gradient layer below this, set to Multiply at 60% Opacity. This blended from a cool foreground green to a warm off-white in the distance. Not only does this intensify the umbrella lights but it also serves to separate the foreground and distance.



Fig.20

The foreground looks sufficiently detailed at the moment but the background umbrellas still lack a little definition. On a further layer I add in some subtle variations and a few lights (Fig.19).

Adding Characters & Textural Detail

The repetition of the umbrella helps convey a sense of perspective, but to really give the scene a scale we can use a common device – the inclusion of figures. In Fig.20 I have added a crowd of characters spanning the foreground through to the distance which serve as a measuring stick.

To help define the foreground a little more we can use photographs to add detail and suggest an architectural style. It is a question of sifting through reference images to find the most suitable types of imagery. Once pasted into your picture it will need to be correctly aligned either by hand or by way of the vanishing point filter, and normally it is necessary to colour correct it. In Fig.21 you can see where the two photos have been positioned and adjusted to fit in with

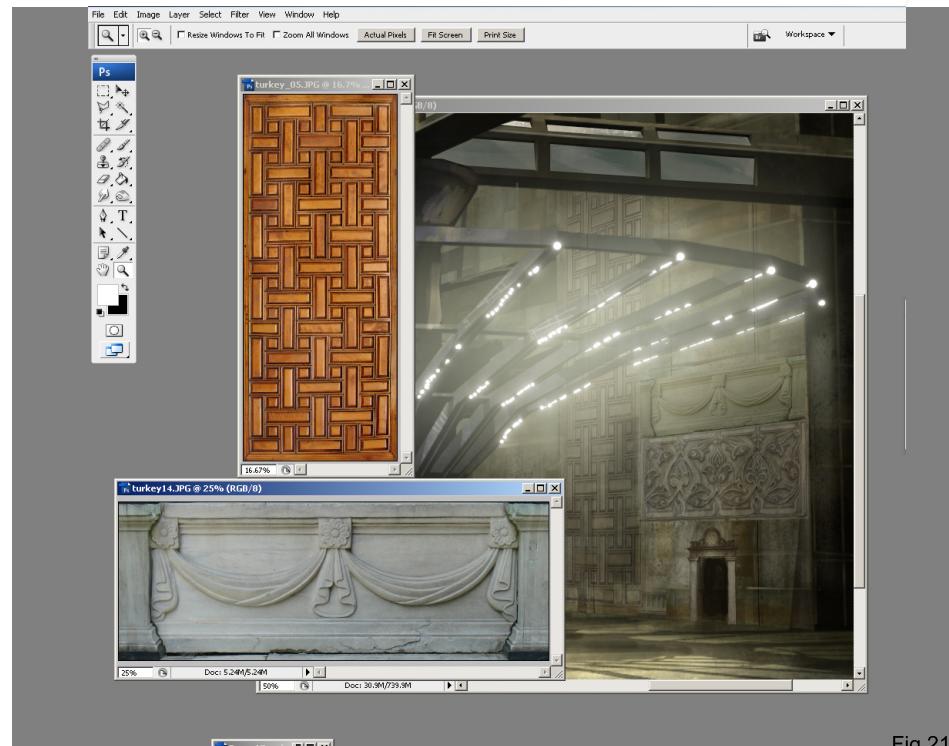


Fig.21

the scene. Either desaturate the photos and then select Overlay or Soft Light as the blending mode, or use a combination of Curves and Image Adjustments to blend them in and leave on Normal mode, as I have done in this case. It is a good rule of thumb to reserve this type of

detail to the most prominent areas only – the near section of wall in this instance.

We can apply this principle to the characters and add detail to the nearest few – albeit with brushwork, but nevertheless continuing this treatment of having more detail in the foreground (Fig.22). I also decide on some railings along the near side which echo the elevated framework and help balance the top of the image with the base.

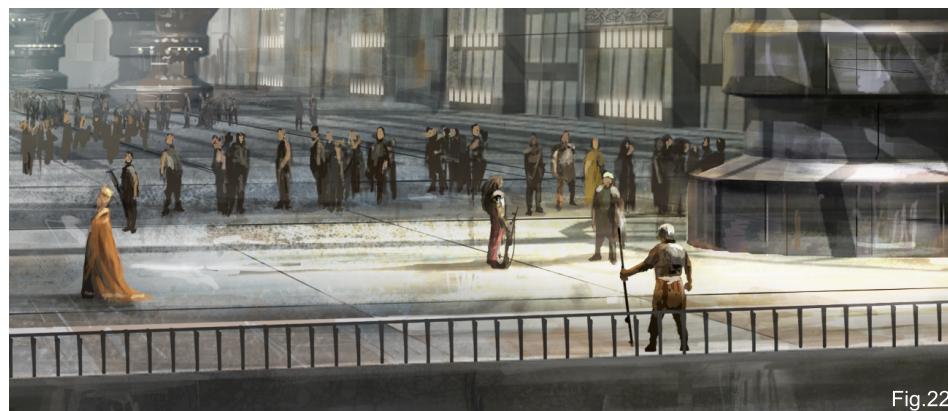


Fig.22

Final Refinements

The painting is at a stage where it can almost be called complete, aside from a few minor tweaks which will further enhance it. One area

Using 3D as a Base for 2D Painting

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that will benefit from some extra treatment is the background section where the ground plane meets the horizon line. As the chamber is brightly lit at one end it follows that the light will bleach out the most distant figures and also be reflected somewhat along the floor. **Fig.23** shows the before and after stage which uses a soft, blurred pale green layer set to Hard Light to create this extra depth, and which also helps the far umbrella recede a little more.

If we look back at **Fig07** you will notice the flaws apparent in the shadows layer which does not take into account atmospheric perspective. It is possible to switch on Fog in SketchUp but this is best achieved in Photoshop for more accurate results and emphasizes why the 3d renders should only be considered a guide.

I also add a new skylight using an orange Outer Glow as part of the Layer Style, as I feel that the blue colour jarred too much with the scene as a whole and neither created a warm or intense enough light that seemed to reflect the overall mood (**Fig.24**).

It is good practice to work on multiple layers during the painting process in order that changes can be made easily at any point and certain details such as the crowd can be hidden

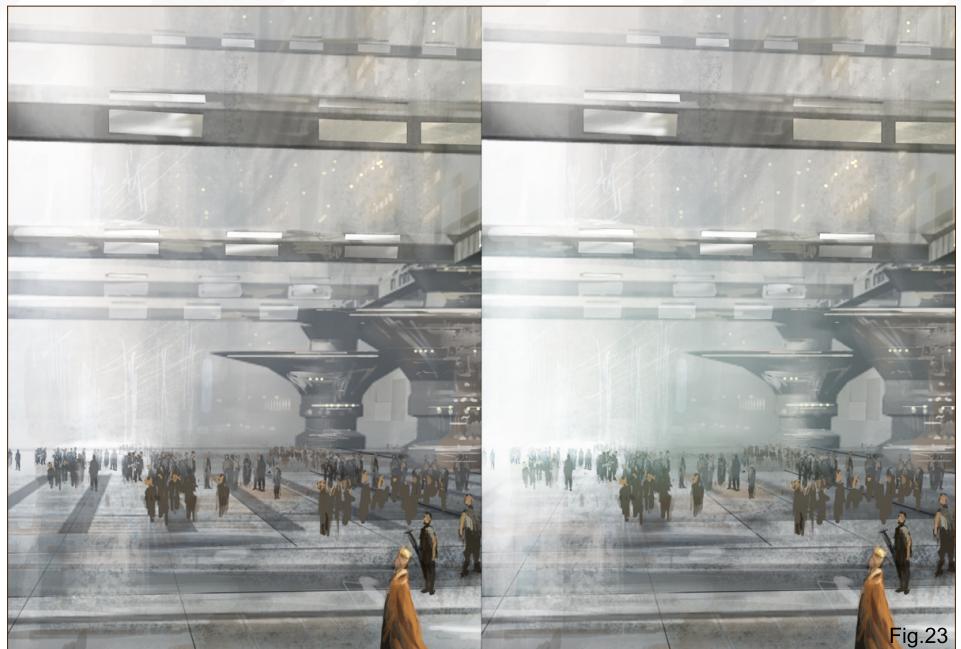


Fig.23

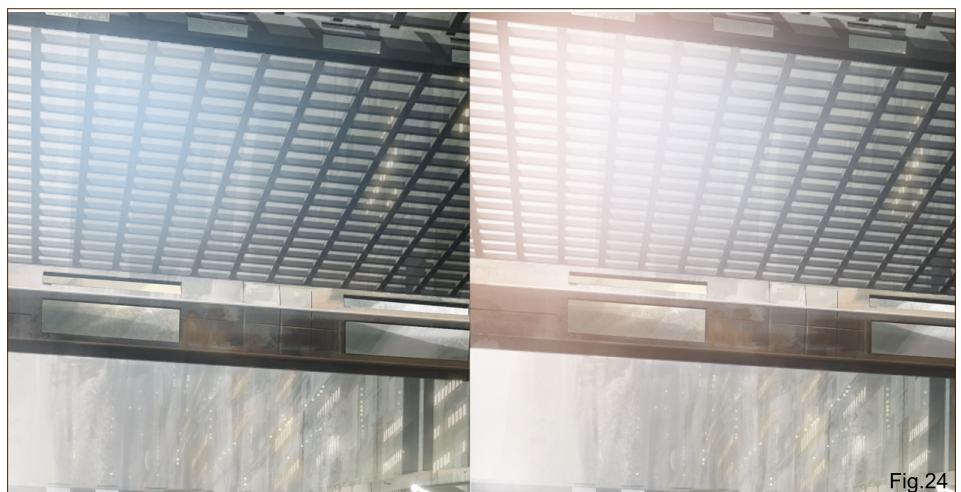


Fig.24

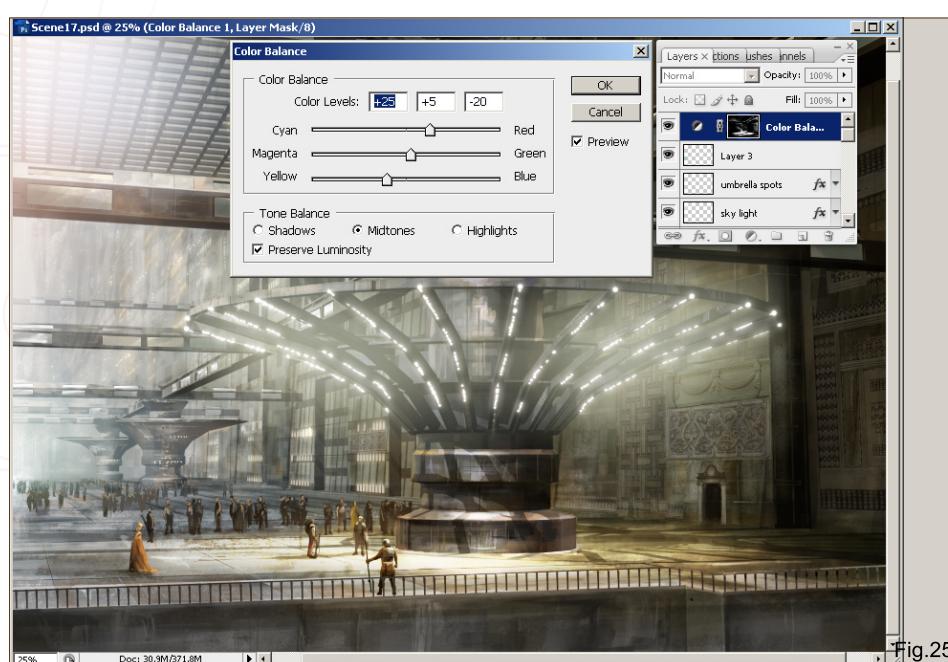


Fig.25

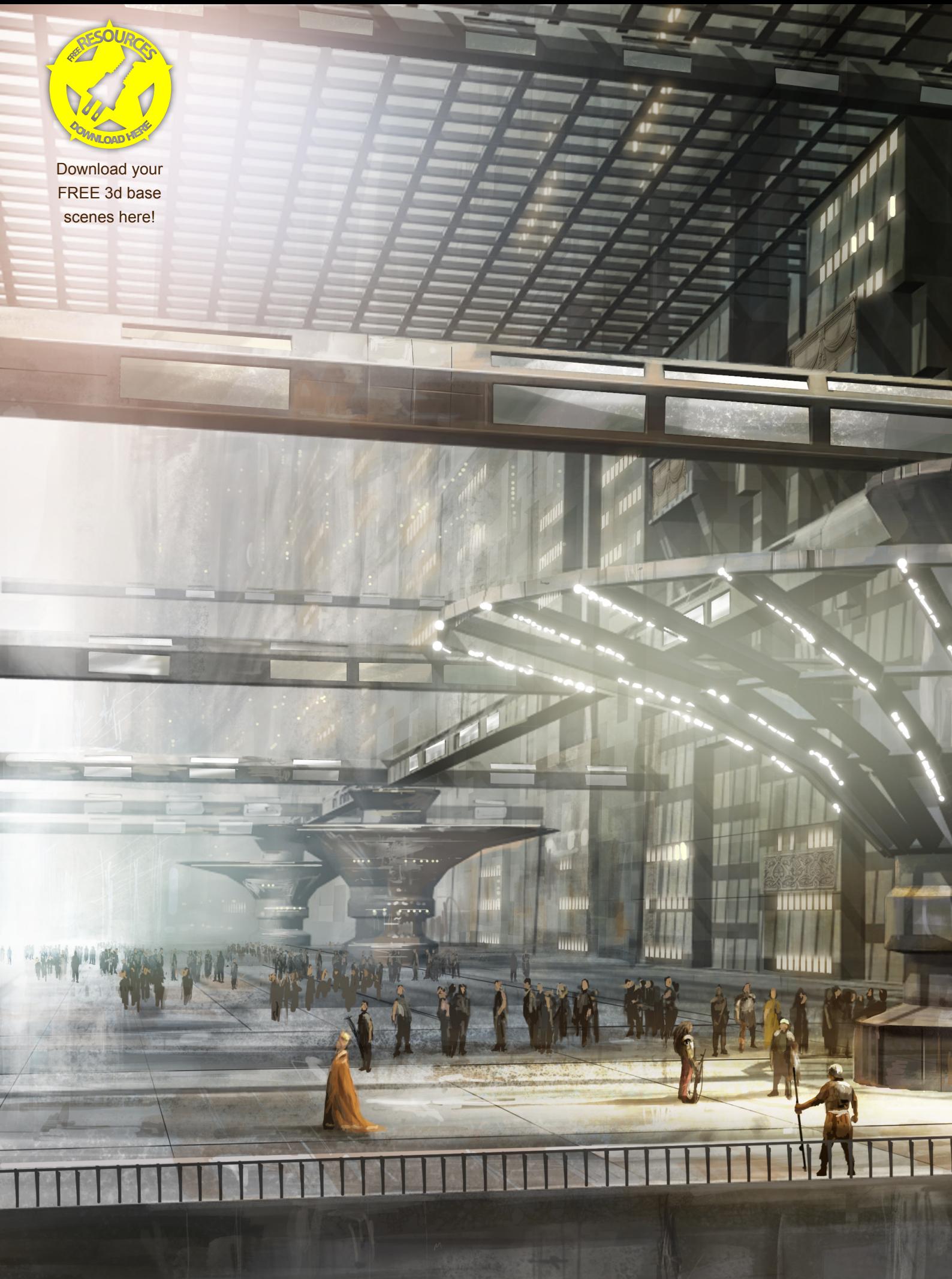
or even duplicated if needs be. When you feel confident that you do not need to make any more changes you can flatten all or at least a selection of your layers.

The last stage that I often employ is an Adjustment Layer of some sort, as this enables further alterations to the painting such as colour scheme, contrast and lighting. The great part of this function is that it offers the use of a mask to localise the effects and also means that it can be reversed or even discarded if needs be.

In **Fig.25** you will notice a Colour Balance Adjustment Layer at the top of the Layers palette in which I have moved the sliders towards a warmer colour (red and yellow).



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The small white areas evident in the mask reveal these warmer values which are seen beneath the umbrella, whereas the black acts as a mask hiding this colour adjustment.

And this last modification marks the end of the painting, the final version of which can be seen in Fig.26.

Conclusion

It has been regarded by many traditional artists (including myself to a degree) that using 3D as a template for a 2D painting promotes a less skilful approach. It is undeniably true that by drawing this particular scene as opposed to using 3D would have required a greater regard and understanding of perspective, and that creating an accurate replica would be far more challenging. However, it also follows that by creating a digital version of a concept is also far more forgiving a process than using actual paint and brushes.

If we view digital painting as an accepted practice within certain sectors of the modern, commercial art industry, which I believe is inarguable then surely 3D is but another yarn in this weave we know as "digital art". After all, can we not regard 3D as the carefully lit life models set up by the Old Masters, or a substitute for the camera used by so many painters over the last century?

Programmes such as Google SketchUp allow artists to quickly and easily explore and experiment with ideas that relate to form and composition, and in so doing inform their work and lend it a believability. More importantly it can save time in the long run, which is an important factor in today's climate.

I hope that this tutorial has validated in some way the inclusion of 3D in a 2D world, but it is worth remembering that there is no real substitute for traditional art skills – all software, no matter how sophisticated, is useless without a puppeteer!

Richard Tilbury

For more from this artist visit:

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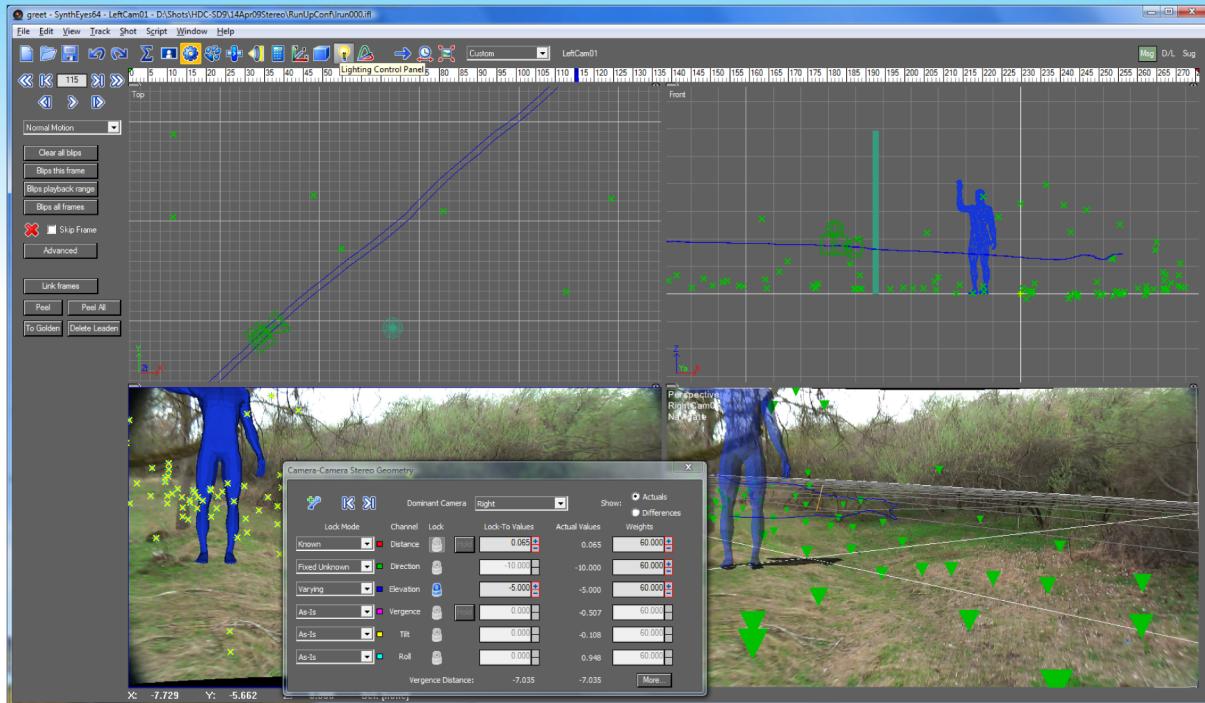
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SPEED PAINTING

Welcome to the Speed Painting section of the magazine. This month we've asked two artists to produce a speed painting based on a simple, one-line brief. Here we feature the final paintings and the overview of the creation processes.

This month our talented artists, **Robin Olausson** and **Richard Tilbury**, tackle the topic:

The waves slammed against the cliffs

Speed Painting

The waves slammed against the cliffs



Robin Olausson

Created In: Photoshop

Introduction

Ok, so for this theme I would like to do something different; my first thoughts were to make some kind of a landscape with cliffs and aggressive waves hitting the coastline, but then I came up with something along the same lines but different ... I'm going to take the idea of aggression and try to convey it in a smaller scene, rather than a huge ocean. I want to make a narrow and 'up close' situation. So let's get started.

Step 1

With a large Soft Round brush I start blocking in shapes, just to get a feel of where I'm heading with this piece. The next things I want to achieve



Fig.01

at this early stage are to get some kind of depth going on in the image, as well as getting a feel for the general lighting – the direction of, etc. The round, hard-edged shapes make me think that they could perhaps be some form of rock – you know, rocks that have been worn down by years and years of wind and water, eventually making them smooth (Fig.01).

Step 2

Since I'm heading for a picture with depth in it, there needs to be some kind of a perspective going on. Even if you're dealing with mostly abstract, natural-shaped objects, you still need to deal with perspective. With different sized rocks and water waves, I'm introducing some abstract perspective whilst at the same time framing the image, thinking of the composition and trying to lead the viewer's eye around the piece, preventing their attention from falling off the image by 'blocking' the corners and leading them back into the scene (Fig.02).



Fig.02

Step 3

Before this stage the image was very monochromatic and dull, so here I'm bringing in a couple of new colours – just subtle changes in hue, nothing too saturated. I'm thinking of my whole painting process like sculpting in a way, trying to carve out the elements. The same thing goes for the colouring; I start slow with minor differences in hue just to get some variety to the piece, and as the whole image progresses there is room for more colour – just don't push it too hard in the beginning and try to save up your contrasts for later.

As you can see, I've kept the perspective in mind while painting the water; as things descend into space they get smaller, and so does my stream of water (**Fig.03**).

Step 4

Ok, so we now have a good start to the image: we've got some depth going on, a focal point

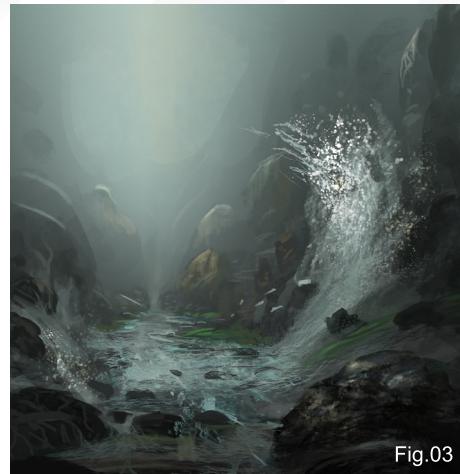


Fig.03

with some minor focal points as well, and a descending composition. However, it seems too heavy at the bottom and feels like there is something missing in the upper part. So with a regular round brush I scribble in a house with some new colour, slowly building up visual interest throughout the entire piece (**Fig.04**).

Even though this is a speed painting you should think about what you are doing. I mean, I've

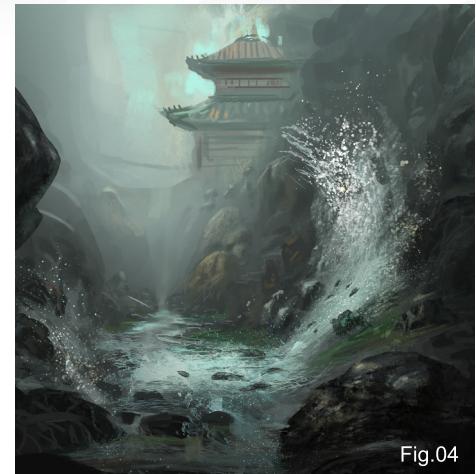


Fig.04

seen lots of young artists who are fairly new to digital painting fall into the pitfall of thinking that speed paintings just focus on painting as quickly as possible, without paying real attention to what they are doing. Take your time; speed comes with practice, it's not something you gain instantly! Sure, there are reasons to do speed paintings really quickly as well: it forces you not to think too much about what you are doing and is really good for your creativity; it makes you come up with things you never would have otherwise ... But! You've got to know and be able to see the difference. There are lots of great artists that can paint awesome speed paintings in 1 to 2 hours, but this doesn't mean that they do it sloppily! From practice they know what to focus on to make the image work. My advice is to take it slow; aim to make a good picture out of it and don't think too much about how much time it takes, as it's the end result that matters.



Fig.05

Step 5

There really isn't too much to say about this step, it's all about giving the viewer's eye some more detail to feast on. For the yellow sky I make a new layer set to Overlay and use a large Soft Round brush to paint. I try to keep my layers as few as possible only working with around 2 to 3 layers at one time; I then merge them down when I'm happy with the result. The tree in the background is made using an opaque brush with no pressure sensitivity on to get some crisp and sharp edges. The foreground

Speed Painting

The waves slammed against the cliffs

foliage is made with a custom brush – a pretty standard foliage one – plus some selection tool work (**Fig.05**).

Step 6

Finally, I merge the whole image and transform it (Edit > Transform > Distort), which is actually a pretty good way of trying new stuff out. I also change the overall colours slightly by copying the whole image and then changing the Curves (Ctrl + L) and the Hue/Saturation (Ctrl + U).

Following on from the previous step I also add even more detail, such as more rocks, splashing waves and adding the figure into the foreground. This is all pretty easy since I have my colour palette worked out as well all the values across the image, so it's just a matter of colour picking and refining details (**Fig.06 – Final**).

Conclusion

When you're doing a speed painting, if you have an idea in mind, try making some thumbnails

before you start rendering things out, and for speeding things up try out some brushes with customised attributes, such as Dual Brush, Scattering, etc. If you don't have a clue about what you're going to paint, I suggest keeping it loose and fast in the early stages, but don't lose what makes a good image in the end; try to keep this in mind when you start rendering your paintings.

Robin Olausson

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or contact

tv1000@spray.se





Richard Tilbury

Created In: Photoshop

Introduction

A couple of months ago I spent a week in Cornwall in southern England, and during my time there made some excursions to a few coastal fishing villages. The experience of watching the waves crashing into the rocks and harbour walls will help to fuel this particular speed painting. The Atlantic Ocean has a wilder and more ferocious nature compared to the English Channel, and so this coupled with the rugged coastline gives me plenty of memories to draw upon here.

I begin by creating a canvas with a wide landscape aspect in order to try and emphasise the vastness of the ocean. I lay down a blue grey colour for both the sky and sea, and place the landmass at the right edge of the composition (Fig.01).

To add some depth to the scene I paint in a distant headland, jutting out to sea, which also



Fig.01

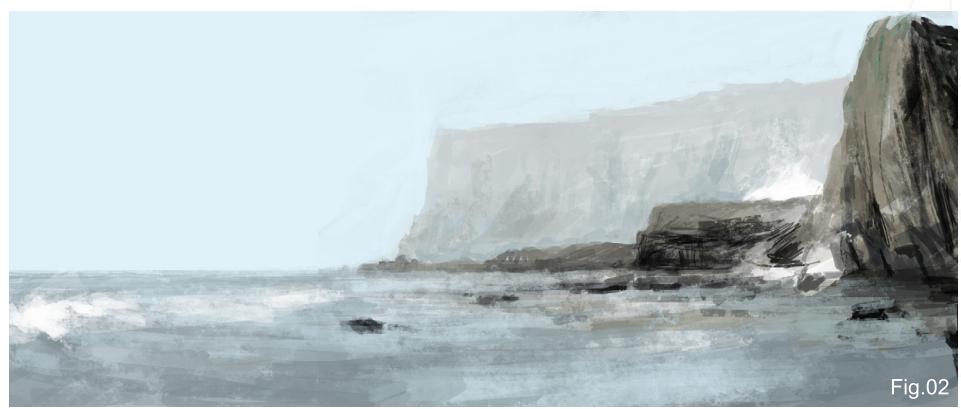


Fig.02



Fig.03

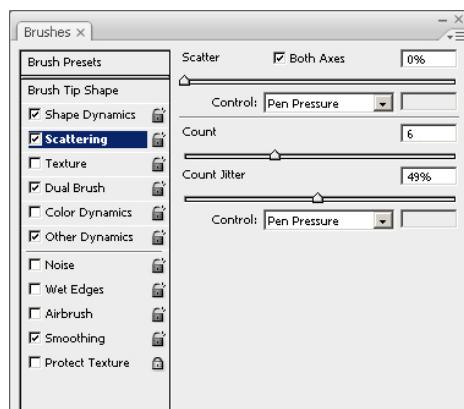


Fig.04



Fig.05

helps to lead the eye across the canvas space from the right hand side (Fig.02).

At this stage the image looks very bleached and washed out, and is in need of some more colour and drama. I add a touch of cerulean blue to

the water and darken the sky to suggest an oncoming storm (Fig.03).

As the title is hinged around waves, I decide to create a custom brush for this task alone, which I use to block in the foreground foam (Fig.04).

Speed Painting

The waves slammed against the cliffs

I then reduce the overall brightness of the picture (Image > Adjustments > Brightness/Contrast) and add some darker shadows along the rocks to create more contrast (**Fig.05**).

The next step is to add more foam to convey a rough sea and help illustrate the ferocity of the waves hitting the rocks. I use a custom brush which incorporates some Scattering and Dual Brush functionality to give me a spray like effect (**Fig.06**).

I decide that the shape of the headland needs to taper off as the shape seems somewhat awkward. I also paint in some more foam around the landmass to help its relationship with the water, as well as softening the edges of the spray a bit more using the same brush as before (**Fig.07**).

The painting is all but finished now, barring a few small changes. I create a new layer on which I paint in a blue colour at around 65% opacity to make the distant cliffs look even further away.



Fig.07

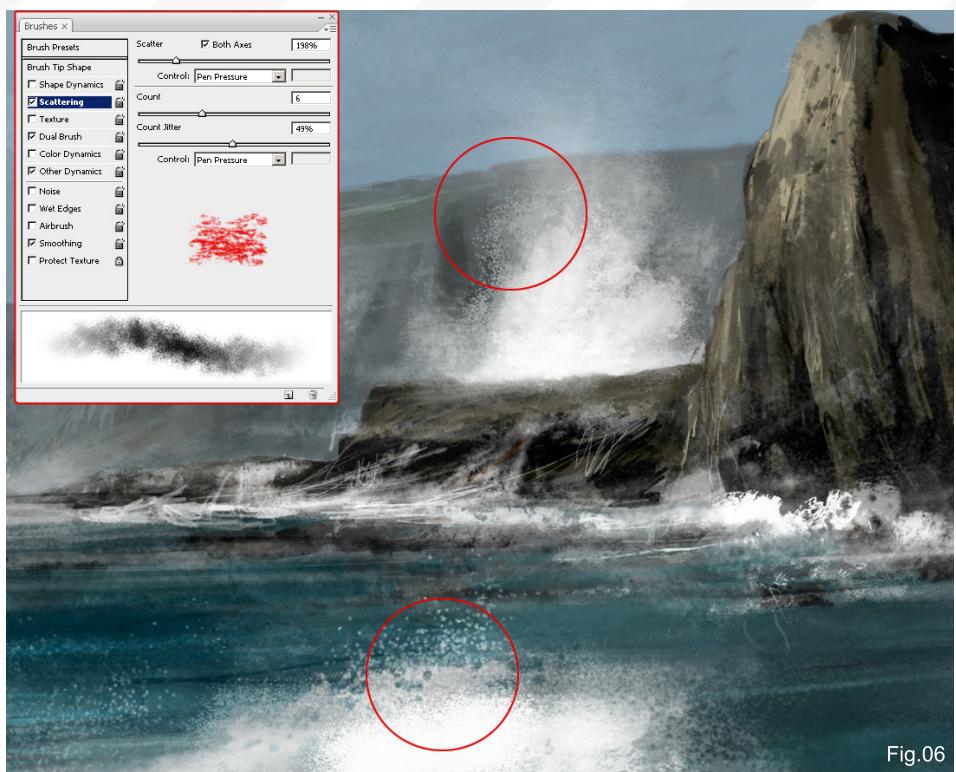
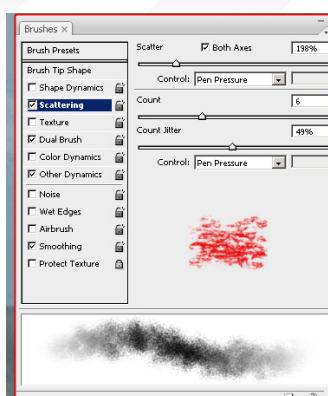


Fig.06

Throughout this process I have been painting on a number of layers in order to give me the ability to backtrack for the purposes of this tutorial. It is always good practice to flatten these at intermediate stages otherwise the files can become very complicated and take up a lot of memory.

Once satisfied, I flatten the image and then finish by applying an Adjustment Layer that affects the brightness and contrast. I darken the entire image and then, using a Soft Round

Airbrush set to black, paint into the mask to reveal the original image apart from the sky. This I leave a darker grey to keep a stormy feel throughout the picture (**Fig.08**).

Richard Tilbury

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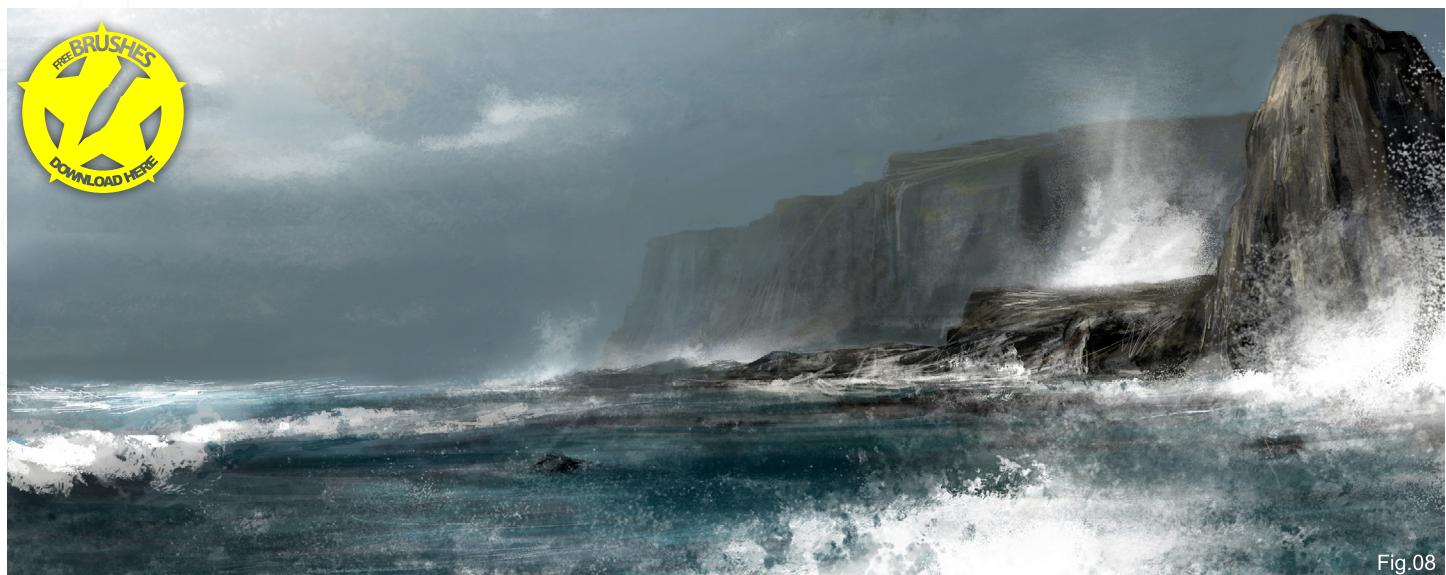


Fig.08

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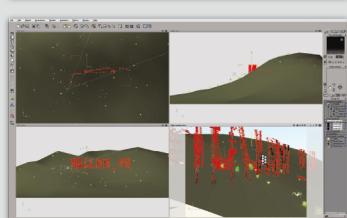
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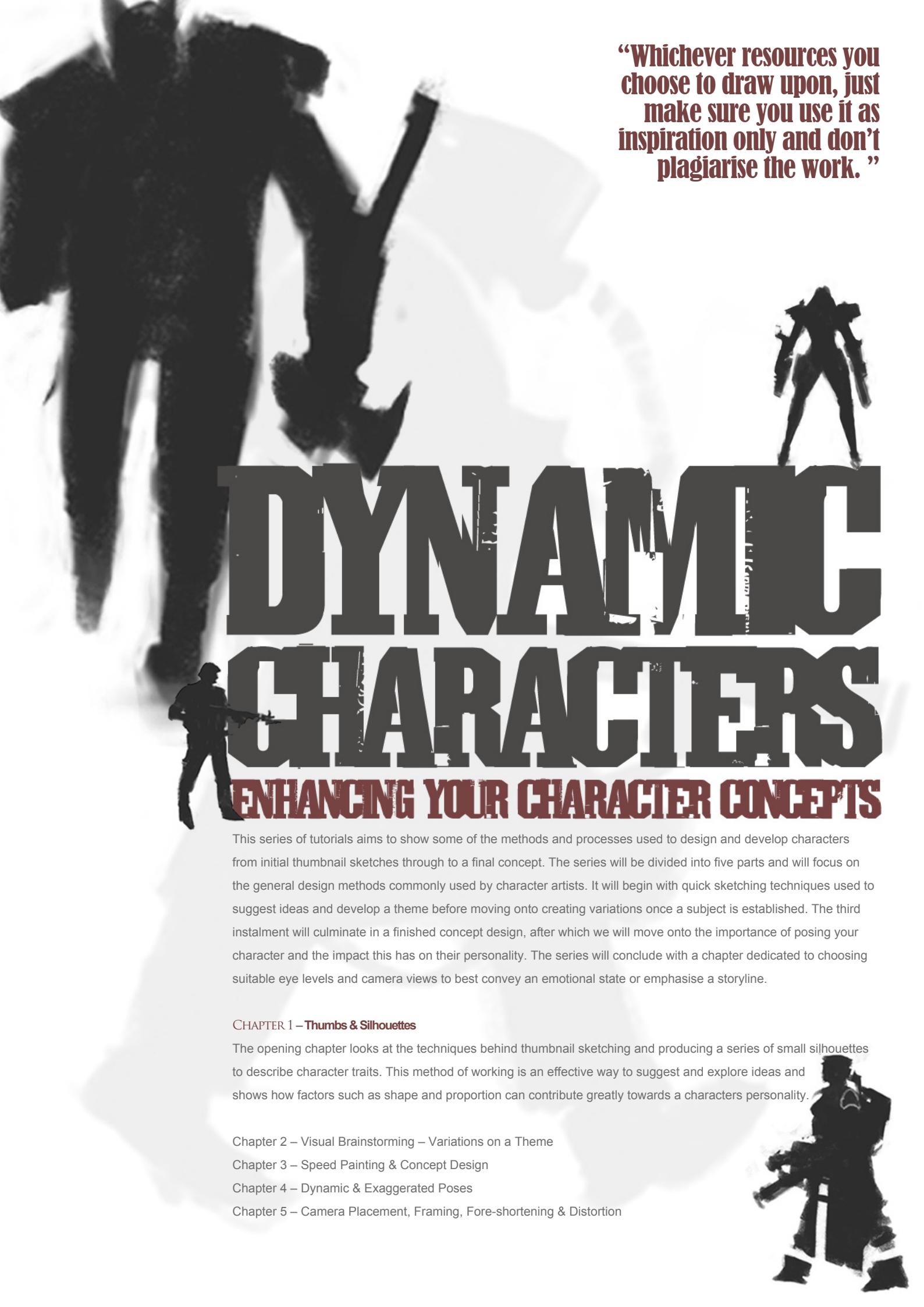
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“Whichever resources you choose to draw upon, just make sure you use it as inspiration only and don’t plagiarise the work.”

DYNAMIC CHARACTERS

ENHANCING YOUR CHARACTER CONCEPTS

This series of tutorials aims to show some of the methods and processes used to design and develop characters from initial thumbnail sketches through to a final concept. The series will be divided into five parts and will focus on the general design methods commonly used by character artists. It will begin with quick sketching techniques used to suggest ideas and develop a theme before moving onto creating variations once a subject is established. The third instalment will culminate in a finished concept design, after which we will move onto the importance of posing your character and the impact this has on their personality. The series will conclude with a chapter dedicated to choosing suitable eye levels and camera views to best convey an emotional state or emphasise a storyline.

CHAPTER 1 – Thumbs & Silhouettes

The opening chapter looks at the techniques behind thumbnail sketching and producing a series of small silhouettes to describe character traits. This method of working is an effective way to suggest and explore ideas and shows how factors such as shape and proportion can contribute greatly towards a characters personality.

Chapter 2 – Visual Brainstorming – Variations on a Theme

Chapter 3 – Speed Painting & Concept Design

Chapter 4 – Dynamic & Exaggerated Poses

Chapter 5 – Camera Placement, Framing, Fore-shortening & Distortion

DYNAMIC CHARACTERS

PART 1: THUMBS, SILHOUETTES & SPECIAL BRUSHES

Created In:

Photoshop

Introduction

Creating artwork is a wonderful gift, a pleasure that I cherish and indulge in on a daily basis, because it is both my favourite past time and because it is also my profession. For myself, and undoubtedly many of you reading this, there is no comparable experience of diving stylus first into an alternate reality, indulging our coolest ideas and dancing the tango with plain old creativity. However, speak to any artist and I'm sure they'll vouch for the fact that it is also an activity that can drive many of us to the heights of frustration. This is especially true if we don't have battle tested procedures and processes that we can rely on when inspiration and a loose brush alone aren't enough.

This topic delves into the very heart of the creative process, the initial flowing of ideas onto paper when we feel our ideas are strongest and also gives insight into workflows you can rely on when your art director comes back to you and says, "Give me something more!"

Now, before we begin, I'd like to point out that even though these ideas are easily incorporated into casual or fine art making, my focus

(and my experience) is that of a commercial artist, and as such this is the audience my writing will speak most clearly to.

And with all that out of the way, let's get started!

Before you get started

If you know me, then you'll know what I am going to tell you to begin with – your research! Whether you know or understand the subject matter intimately or not, you need to fill your consciousness with new information on a consistent basis in order to provide fresh ideas/ reminders for your images ... or you'll risk growing stale and creating highly derivative art.

What does this mean in a practical sense? Well, in today's age of blogs, online articles, image archives, forums and the like, this essentially means jumping on the internet and using your favourite search engine to source out some visuals to kick start your engine. Some of my favourites are listed below – it certainly isn't exhaustive, but these are typically all I need to find good references:

- www.Google.com
- www.ConceptArt.org
- www.Flickr.com

If you don't have the internet (in which case I'm not entirely sure how you got this e-magazine in the first place) then it means a little more leg work: going to your local library, picking up a newspaper, magazine, trade journal, or

watching a movie and stockpiling your mental arsenal from there can also be a good start.

Whichever resources you choose to draw upon, just make sure you use it as inspiration only and don't plagiarise the work. That would be unscrupulous and does not help your skill level grow; indeed it will more likely lower your confidence in your own abilities.

Thumbnail Sketching

So you're given your brief, you experience that irrevocable moment in which you are delivered your design task and the synapses start firing off instantly and a myriad of images start flashing through your mind.

Now what?

Well, the best thing to do is to start getting your ideas into visual form, whether on paper or digitally. Don't talk about it with other people, we're not professors of literature, there's plenty of time for discussion later – just get your pen moving and don't stop!

Should you warm up, I hear you ask? Should I practice something to get the blood flowing through my fingers, you might say?

Nope, don't sweat it!





Fig.01

You know what? The first few will probably be really bad, just accept it and have the confidence to know that the more little sketches you do, the better they will be as you go along.

It is important to understand that how it looks right now is of little importance at this early stage, they are representational shorthand ideas for yourself that will lead to more developed ideas down the track. It helps to imagine yourself as a documentary agent, trying to capture the images that are flashing before your mind's eye.

Quick Initial Sketches – So to start off (Fig.01), I create a relatively small canvas on my screen in Photoshop – roughly 400 pixels by 400 pixels at 72 dpi. Now, this is a fairly small size and nowhere near print quality, but because this is the digital medium I am using it doesn't really affect me as I am able to upscale at any time.

Another practicality is that the canvas does not chew memory; at such a minuscule size your brushstrokes can be as free and wild and quick as you like, with no danger of lag. Of course, with today's increasingly fast computers this

tends to be less and less of an issue, but I still like to start off at a small scale so as to resist the temptation of jumping into the details immediately.

As the name would suggest, thumbnail sketches (or simply thumbnails) are very small scribbles, designed to be fast, putting down what you feel, emptying your mind of your current thoughts so that they may be replaced by more ideas, and by jotting these ideas in quick succession you are aiding the velocity of the process.

If you are wondering what sort of sketching you should use to document your ideas, or how much is too much or too little, then you're most likely not alone. The answer is that you should use as much information as you need, but as little as possible. If you feel you can sketch a character using just plain old line work, then so be it. If you need to put in some value to bring out the form, then do that. There is no single answer for everyone, and so you should document your ideas using what you feel comfortable with.

Please, don't be afraid to go crazy at this stage, every thought is fair game to be plotted on your sheet – in fact, some thumbs will simply be filler used to dirty up the page. I don't know about you, but a blank sheet staring me in the face is intimidating, it's saying to me, "I dare you to dirty me up ... Oh no, actually I double dare ya!" To which I usually reply by throwing down a few incoherent lines to get past that initial Clean Sheet Syndrome. Once that page has been violated with scribbles, it is no longer as imposing to draw on and a mental barrier is broken, allowing your sketches to flow more freely.

Trying Out Different Types of Sketches – As

you can see from **Fig.02**, I am not coy about creating "dirty" marks on the page – in fact I think it can go some way to breaking that computer illustrated look that so many digital art beginners seem to fall into.

I tend to work with very simple brushes, or brushes that come standard with the programme I use, which is Photoshop – mostly a combination of soft airbrushes and harder edged airbrushes with reduced spacing so as to mimic continuous tone. I tend to use

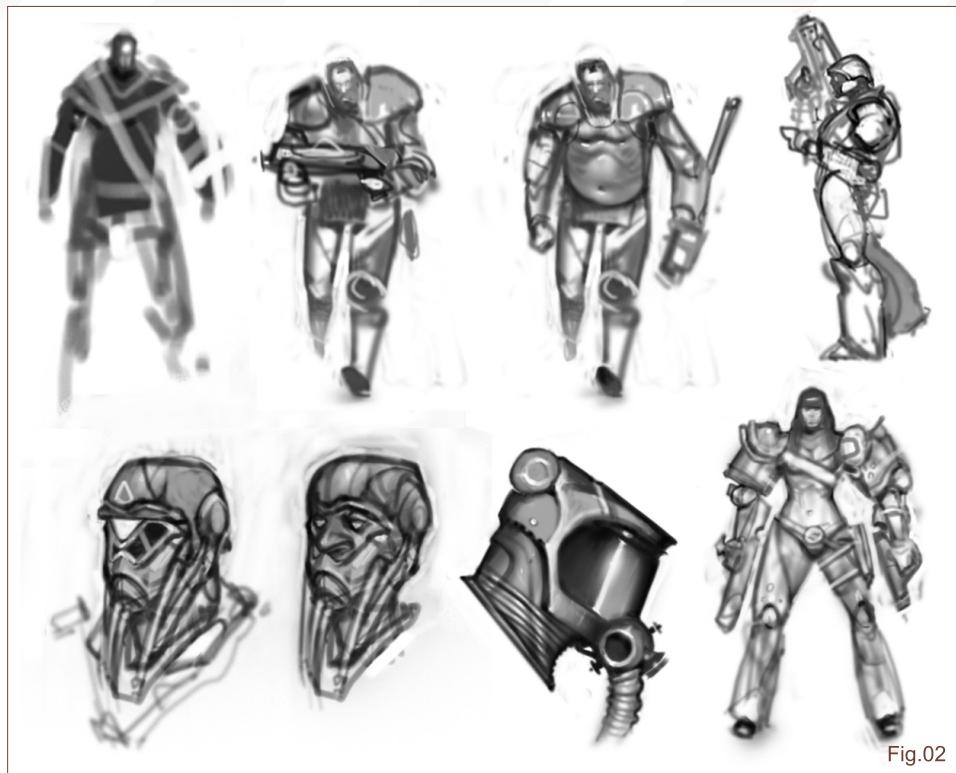


Fig.02

these brushes as a high-tech version of a pencil or a block of chalk, typically starting by laying large areas of tone onto the canvas before cutting back into the shapes with white.

In order to facilitate this quick process I mainly use my stylus, the spacebar to grab the canvas, and the Alt key to colour-pick the tones I want from previous laid down strokes. When you get used to it, this is a very quick method of working and allows you to put your ideas down very quickly.

You may also notice on the illustration (**Fig.02**) that there are some images that look very similar to each other – herein lies another of digital media's advantages: the ability to create variations simply by using the Marquee Tool and creating a new layer using the existing illustrated layer as the source. This will then allow you illustrate over the image, creating a variation side by side to the original. The beautiful thing is that it frees up your inhibition to experiment and can be done infinitely!

Now, up to this point, we've been thinking of the sketches as a personal tool – that is, an external

representation of a myriad of internal ideas in an attempt to organise free-flowing thoughts into a structured pattern for our own personal use. We have part of the design in our minds and this can often cause us to stop short of creating sketches that mean anything to anyone but ourselves.

This situation would be fine if the work we are doing is only for ourselves, however, most often the art we do isn't just for fun, it's because someone is paying us to deliver. These people need to understand what we are thinking at every step of the process to reduce the likelihood of going in the wrong direction down the line – it saves them time (and money), and it saves you the frustration of having to do major rework.

So this is a very important consideration to keep in

mind (important enough that I am reiterating it) – as commercial artists, we never operate in a vacuum, our work is generally part of a greater whole, in editorial enhancing the writing or as concept art which precedes the asset building phase of game or film development. In short, we need to share our ideas effectively with other people, and most often with people who are not artists.

Cleaning Up – Looking at **Fig.03** now, I have chosen to clean up this design because I feel the character has poise, balance and potential to experiment – it is also the least developed and would demonstrate the process between a rather abstract image built of large shapes and how you would begin to add in the design elements gradually.

In this case, I also increase the resolution to 1221 pixels by 657 pixels, so that I will be comfortable while adding the details. I'd also like to mention that in most of the concept art positions I have worked in, the bulk of this kind of work is done as a rough guide for the 3D artists who tend to work with dual monitor set ups, so print versions are not really required. If,



Fig.03

however, you need to generally print off your work, stick to working on at least A4 as this will allow you sufficient detail to print off on A4 sheets.

Silhouettes

Like everything else in art, ideation is a fluid process that does not always take the same route. Indeed I would even go as far as to encourage you to occasionally venture upon the path less travelled in order to derive new processes, new styles and new ways of thinking.

Creating silhouettes are simply another form of visual shorthand, a tool that can be used as a fore-runner to a fully fledged design besides line and tonal sketches.

Silhouette Design – As you can see from **Fig.04**, creating a silhouette is designing the character from the outside inwards; you are determining the features that directly influence the extents of the character and blanking the rest, leaving your imagination to fill in the details.

In the example you can again see the use of duplicates, allowing me to fill a page of silhouettes very quickly by using the copy-paste method. This will free up your time to work on making sure that each silhouette receives your attention, regarding their individuality and unique qualities.

Adhering to the principles of creating silhouettes is important for a number of reasons:



Fig.04



Fig.05

- It removes the temptation of spending too long on the minutiae – not being able to putter away endlessly on infinitely small details expedites the process and forces you to think of the big picture
- It enhances the amount of thought given to an object's recognisability from a distance, so a character is easily recognised from far away
- It lets you concentrate on one aspect of design at a time – you don't need to worry about anything else other than the overall shape of the silhouette, the emotional response from the viewer and whether that response is the desired effect based on the design requirements

Of course, once the external shape of the character is agreed upon, it's time to fill in the internal details. This involves the reconciliation of external shapes, with associated internal objects which also serve a functional purpose for the character in question. There's no real 'right' way to go about this, but a good rule I try

to keep is to concentrate on the larger shapes before going into the minute details; it's a very fluid natural progression when you think about it.

Silhouette Detailing – So here is an example of how a character's silhouette is taken from an abstract silhouette, to a fairly well fleshed-out concept (**Fig.05**).

I chose this particular pose because I like its dynamic nature; I felt it had lots of possibilities to explore and so I increased the resolution and began by working in the large shapes roughly, using the same basic brush that I began with. When I was happy with the overall shapes, I began using a soft edged airbrush in order to give the shapes form and roundness, and I envisioned the light source from a frontal raised position. Picking out your light source will answer many questions regarding form, so always keep this in mind early on in the rendering process.

The advent of digital art making has many boons: the ability to revert to a prior state; the efficiency of automation; the ability to paint full

colour pictures without waiting for paint to dry nor having to inhale fumes from solvents.

In the field of concept art, another very time-efficient advantage is the ability to non-destructively create numerous versions based on the same idea.

Versioning – You can see from **Fig.06** that the base image is the same; however, because I have duplicated the image twice, I negate the requirement to think of new poses, and the proportions of the figure have already been taken into account with the first character on the left. This means that for the two characters on the right of the original, there is less to think about, and more effort can be put into things such as the accessories of each.

As you can imagine, the advantages are huge and very economical if you want to create a large number of variations based on a single silhouette or body type. All that is required is the duplication of the image layer you want to work with, and simply painting over the top of it.



Fig.06



Part 1: Thumbs, Silhouettes & Special Brushes

Dynamic Characters

The advantages are huge, and very economical if you want to create a large number of variations based on a single silhouette or body type. All that is required is the duplication of the image layer you want to work with and simply painting over the top of it.

Custom Brushes

These days, custom brushes seem to be a staple of most digital artists' tool boxes. They are one of the aforementioned benefits of the digital age of art making, the process is simple and makes creating repeating elements a breeze.

However, this tutorial isn't going to cover custom brushes.

Yes, I know – huge riots, controversy and all that – but the truth is I just don't use custom brushes for the idea generation process much at all (final piece artwork is a slightly different story, though). There are some artists out there who swear by them because of 'happy accidents', just as there are some, such as myself, who would rather make every stroke deliberate. It's not that I can't use them or don't know how to make them, but I just prefer the control over my work using a regular default brush. Neither workflow is right nor wrong; it is a personal choice. My thoughts are that if you feel comfortable using something and you can deliver the results, your methods work for you!

That being said, because I see such an over-reliance on custom brushes by many novice artists, I'd like to explicitly remind people reading

this that a custom brush is nothing but a tool. Like all tools, there are moments when they should be used, and moments when they should not be used. Custom brushes should never be used to replace the basics of art making and, if worst came to worst, you

should be able to illustrate your thumbnails and silhouettes without them at all. Once you can do this, then using custom brushes may speed up your work, but as always: basic art skills first, flash-tastic technology second.

I'm not trying to discourage the use of custom brushes, by all means I encourage you to try them as well as many other work methods, and you might just find they gel with your working style – they just don't work with mine at this current time.

Rules and Guidelines

When it comes to art, many feel that rules inhibit the artistic expression of some artists. If you want to be a commercial artist, you'll need to kick that idea right out of your head. Creating art in a commercial environment has plenty of constraints which can be bent at times, but certainly not broken, especially if you're not the art director.

These are a few that pop up frequently, so try to keep them in mind when you do your work:

• **Function before form:** It is of absolutely no value to your employer, your client or your art lead if you create art that is flash over substance. The functional value of the costume needs to be there; once it suits the purpose it was built for, then you can make it look cool. One big example is articulation; I see a lot of artists creating these hulking power suits that look cool but are completely impractical and the wearer would simply not be able to lift their arms high enough to scratch their own heads!

• **Rely on pre-existing memes to present your ideas:** Rely to an extent on what has come before in the design world. Red means stop or danger, green means go, sharp means dangerous and round and soft means harmless and user-friendly. Leverage these memes and archetypes to give credibility to your designs

- **Don't 'ape' other people's artwork:** Don't steal, copy, or plagiarise other people's designs. Just don't!

Mindset

I've always been one to insist that what goes on in the head of the art maker is equally, if not more important, than what happens at the business end of a pencil. While I've alluded in various places during the tutorial what I am thinking, here are some of my thoughts on what you should try to keep in mind while you are exploring your ideas on paper:

- You are creating many tiny inconsequential pieces of art: the more you create, the higher the likelihood that you will have within those drawings the elements of the final design
- You are unbiased towards any one design because Murphy's Law will almost always guarantee that the design that least excites you will be chosen by the art director
- Every single sketch, thumbnail, silhouette or scribble is valuable – don't erase them
- Any idea is a good idea; within each sketch holds a key that could open another door which may eventually lead to the final design

So here you are at the end of my write up. I'm sure you're itching to get to some thumbnails underway – that's if you haven't already!

I hope you've enjoyed my tutorial and hopefully picked up one or two pointers. If you have any questions or comments please feel free to send me an email. Until next month: keep drawing!

Darren Yeow

For more from this artist contact them at:
darren@stylus-monkey.com

2D artist

next month

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Image: Carlos Cabrera

This Workshop Series will look at, just as the title suggests, all the things that we need to know to get us started with Photoshop – mainly for painting, but also for other things such as matte painting and photo manipulation, which often use the same tools. We will be covering all the technical aspects of the programme, as well as some technical sides of painting that'll help us starting to swing the virtual brush!

Chapter 1 – July

Introducing Photoshop's Workspace, Graphics Tablets, Screen Calibration, Color Profiles and the Brush Tool. In the first chapter we will be looking at organising Photoshop's Workspace, setting up the programme for optimal usage and setting up a tablet to work with it, calibrating your screen, choosing colour profiles in Photoshop, as well as what to do with the Brush tool and its many options.

Chapter 2 – August

Canvas Settings, Scanning Drawings, Swatches, Colour Pickers, Colour Theory, Layers and Custom Brushes!

Chapter 3 – September

Composition Rules, Sketching and Perspective, Understanding Light and Blocking-In

Chapter 4 – October

Colouring from Greyscale, Colours beyond Blocking-In, Blending Methods and Using Photos

Chapter 5 – November

Quick Masks, Using the Wand Tool, Liquify Filter uses, Layer Masks – and Painting!

Chapter 6 – December

The Final Part: Finishing Touches, Filters, the Unsharpen Mask and Saving your Work





Created In: Photoshop

Introduction

I remember what it was like for me to see digital paintings for the first time: I was dumbstruck, possibly in awe as well. And of course wondering how the heck anyone could do that ... With a mouse! Until someone told me they used a 'graphics tablet'. More awe and wonder. And intrigue. So it was actually possible to use Adobe Photoshop (or PS for short) for painting. How was a mystery to me, but I was determined that it wouldn't stay one for long. So I grabbed myself a wee-tablet – a Wacom Graphire, the first one that came out – and set to playing around in Photoshop. Thankfully, I'd used the programme for a couple of years previously, as otherwise I would have probably despaired.

Since then, I've met many people who were and are just as dumbstruck as I once was, and annoyed that they cannot seem to get the hang

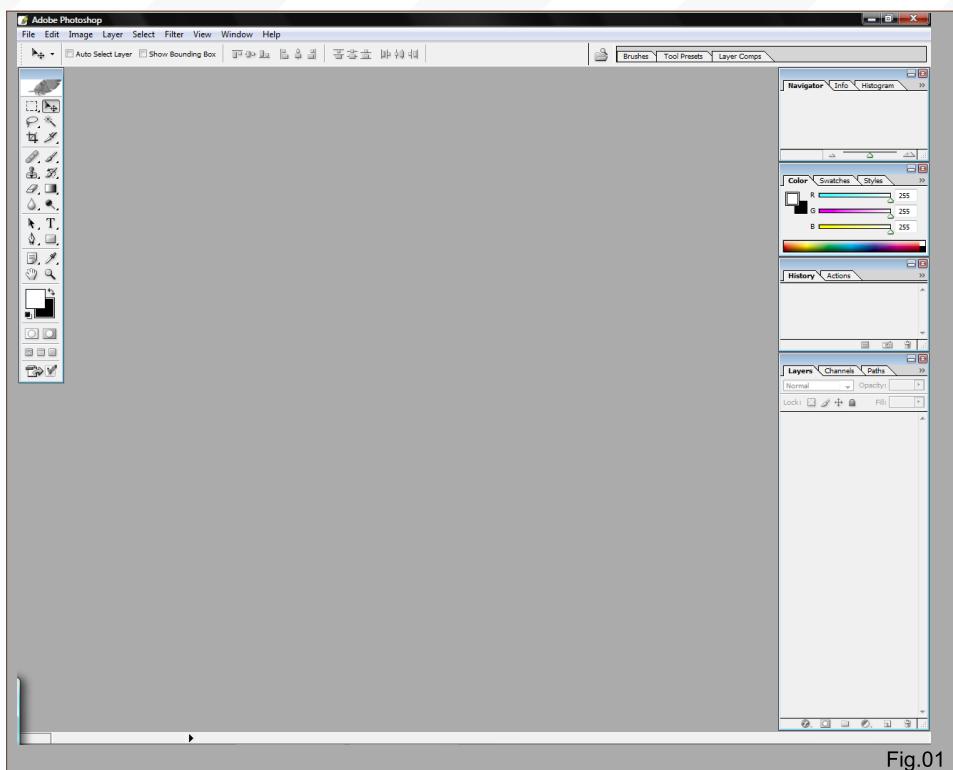


Fig.01

of either Photoshop, a graphics tablet, painting with either one for that matter, or any tutorials that could help with starting out. So this is where this 6-part series of workshops comes in: To unravel the mysteries of Digital Painting in Photoshop, using a graphics tablet.

In these workshops, we will be going through setting up PS and a graphics tablet for optimum usage, learning about brushes, sketching, colours, composition, perspective, layers, textures, lighting, different tools and filters – you name it! Please bear in mind that this is a more technical series, and will not be dealing with how to paint one thing or another, although I will brush over things occasionally (excuse the pun).

This first instalment, which seems awfully long but will only take you a maximum of 15-minutes to actually apply, will be dealing with the, let's say "duller technical things". However, you will need to know about these in order to get you started – and hopefully hooked!

In the Beginning...

Adobe created the perfect painting platform, and Wacom coined temptation in feature-packed

graphics tablets. Put the two together and you get the Big Bang of digital art, or something along those lines.

But before I dig into the inner workings of both, let's just check that we are on the same page:

• Photoshop Version

I have Photoshop CS. A few years old now, but that doesn't really matter. For the tools I use on a regular basis I don't need the newest version all the time. So don't worry if you have an even older version (though anything older than Photoshop 7 might pose a problem for some of the things I'll be explaining). If you have a newer version: lucky you – you've got a slightly more streamlined layout and additional tools that we won't be using [Wink].

• Graphic Tablets

I am working with an almost 6-year-old Wacom Intuos 2. These things don't break that easily, unless you happen to have a chew-happy rodent as a pet – the cables cannot be replaced. Whatever tablet you have, even if it's not a Wacom, you'll be able

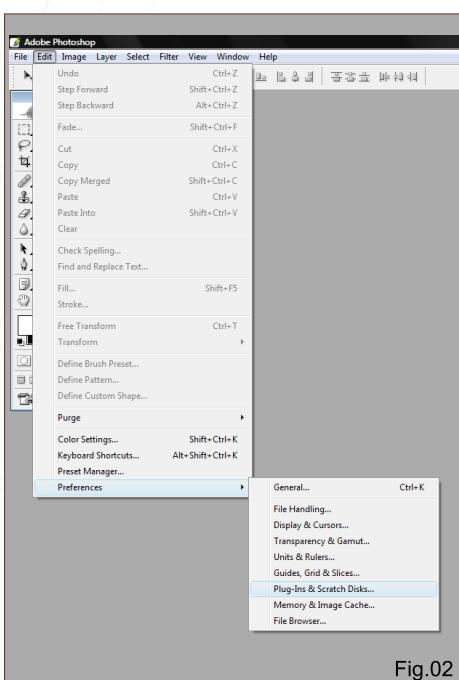


Fig.02

to work with it. Honestly. If you're not really used to it just yet, plug in your mouse and navigate Photoshop as we go along.

So let's open up Photoshop and see what we've got. This would be the default look of the programme, more or less (Fig.01). It's called the Workspace. You have the tools palette to your left (hovering over each tool will give you a short description of what it is), some other palettes to your right, the main menu at the top, and a status bar at the bottom. All in all, a quite convenient layout!

The first thing we do before hitting the panic button and closing PS again is the most important thing we could do: we will set up the Scratch Disks. – The what? – Scratch Disks. These have nothing to do with scratching, and are not real discs either. They are a bit like virtual memory, settings that allow PS to run smoothly, and at its best according to your computer's RAM (Random Access Memory) and processor speed. Without setting these up, you will get quite a few programme errors very soon, including one telling you that "the Scratch Disks are full" and whatever you wanted to do cannot be done.

Therefore, let's go to the main menu and click on **Edit**. In the dropdown menu that appears go right to the bottom and click on **Preferences**, then in the next dropdown menu click on **Plug-Ins & Scratch Disks...** (Fig.02). (I believe in higher Photoshop versions this will be "Performance".) A box will appear that gives you four rows for the Scratch Disk usage. The first one will by default be set to Startup, while the other three are empty (Fig.03).

Now, to run PS properly you do not want the Scratch Disks set to Startup. It's also recommended that they shouldn't be set to a network drive or any kind of removable drive (USB sticks or external hard drives). So click on the arrow next to it and it will give you a choice, namely of the hard drive volumes you have on your computer (Fig.03a).

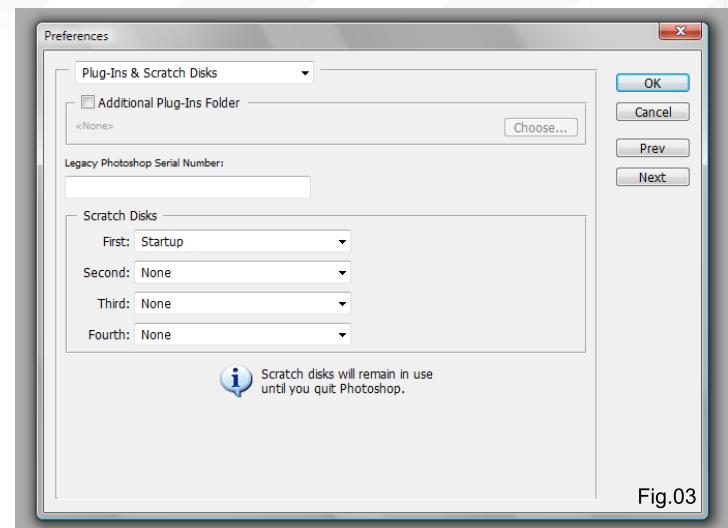


Fig.03

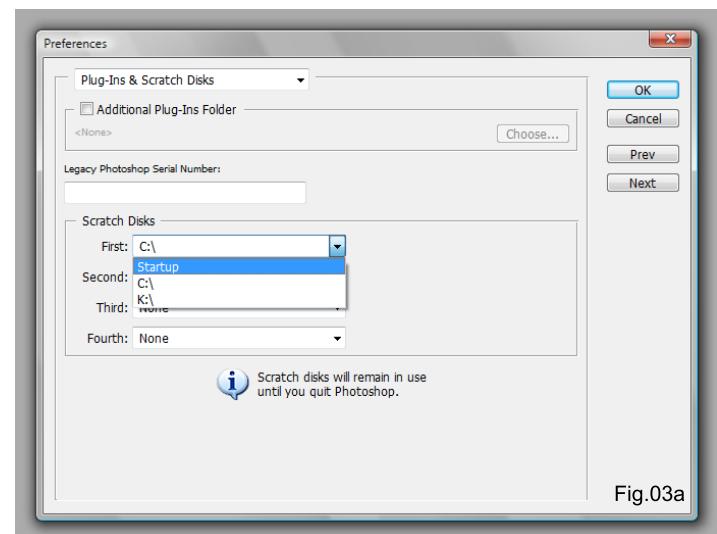


Fig.03a

You can see for me it shows C:\ and K:\ – the latter being my external hard drive, and of absolutely no use in this case. C:\ usually is the drive or partitioned volume that your operating system and programmes are installed on, and that your operating system uses for its virtual memory or paging file. In many cases, especially on cheaper computers, it is also the only drive/volume you will have. If you have a partitioned hard drive, that means you have two volumes, and thus will also have something most likely called D:\, or if you have more than one installed hard drive these will show as well.

Let me stop being confusing for a second and spell it out plainly: For optimum performance of Photoshop, the primary Scratch Disk has to be set to a drive or volume that has sufficient space and is kept in good order at all times (defragmentation is your friend). If you have more than one volume, the primary Scratch Disk should be set to the bigger one of the two – you can check up the sizes of your volumes under My Computer – while the secondary to the smaller one. Those of us with only one volume are a bit out of luck right here ... we'll still be able to work, but maybe not as fast as some others. Set your Scratch Disks (Fig.03b).

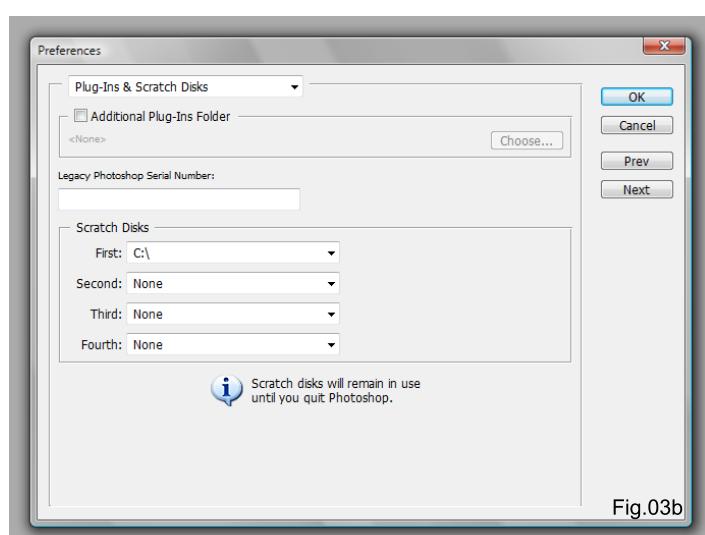


Fig.03b

Beginner's Guide to Digital Painting

Part 1

2d
artist

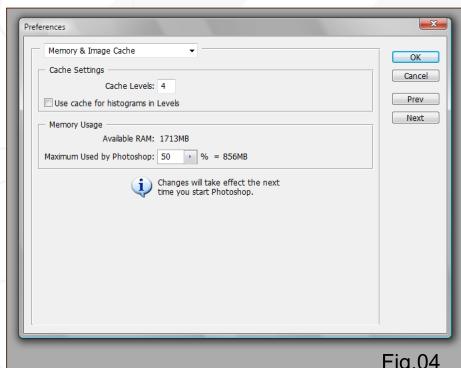


Fig.04

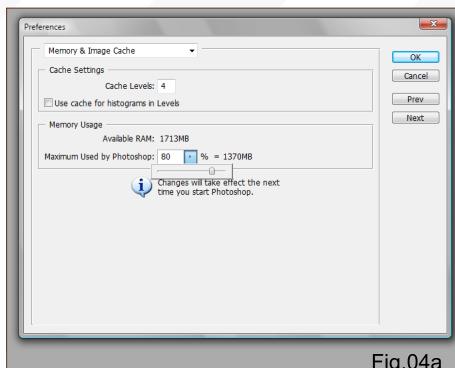


Fig.04a

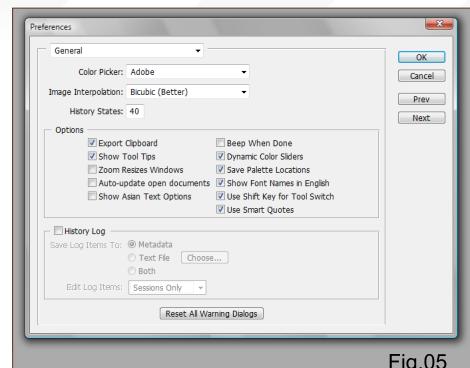


Fig.05

TIP: If you can afford it, and are serious about working with Photoshop, have another hard drive installed in your computer which you can use just for Photoshop's primary Scratch Disk. Or see if someone can partition your hard drive for you. If none of that is an option, keep your drives as clean as possible by defragmenting them regularly and preferably storing personal files on removable media rather than on your computer. I do that at the moment, and it works a treat.

Let's stick with this box for a second and open the dropdown menu at the top of it. It basically gives you the same choices as when clicking **Preferences** from the main PS menu. Click on the **Memory & Image Cache** option. This will give you the chance to enhance the RAM usage of Photoshop (Fig.04). By default, it will be set to 50%. Consider how many other programmes you will be using simultaneously while running PS – the more programmes that

are running at the same time, the more RAM will be used up by them and cannot be used by PS – and using the slider change it to what will suit you and your computer best. I'd recommend not setting it to 100% (Fig.04a).

Another good thing to set up here are the History States. You can find them in the dropdown menu under **General**. The History States are the stages in your image history when you are working which let you go back if you've made a mistake – you know the infamous "Undo" button. 20 may look like a lot, but when you are painting sometimes that isn't quite enough, especially when you are doing very detailed things with lots of brushstrokes. I personally prefer having it set to 40 – just in case (Fig.05).

You can now hit the OK button. The changes we've just made will not take effect until PS is closed and restarted. We'll do just that.

Once we're back in the programme, let's have a look at the Workspace. Some of the things that are hanging around by default won't really be needed, or at least I never make use of them. Also, having all those palettes to the right clutters up the Workspace a bit, giving you less space to use for your images, especially when working on smaller screens. Looking at the palettes (Fig.06), the one right at the top reading Navigator, Info and Histogram, I never use, so I just click the red X of doom and close it. The Navigator can be useful when working on large images, but I will explain that at some later stage – right now it would be too much too fast for those of you who are really new to all this. The next one down, with Color, Swatches and Styles, is partially useful. Click on the Swatches tab and hold it, then drag it onto your Workspace (Fig.06a); it will become a palette all by itself. Then close the palette you just pulled it out of. Do the same with the next one, keeping the History, but not the Actions, and the next, keeping the Layers, but not the Channels or Paths. This leaves us with three palettes that we will definitely be using.

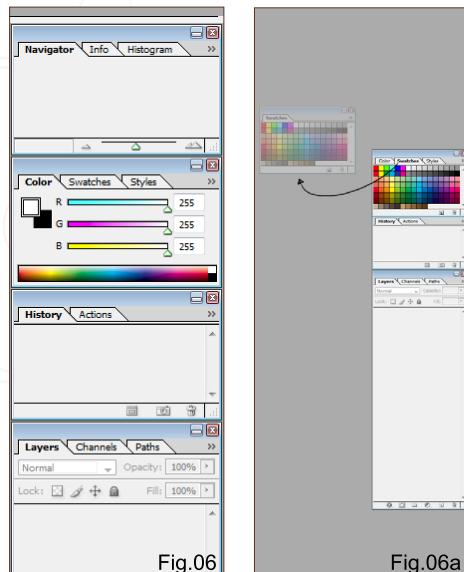


Fig.06

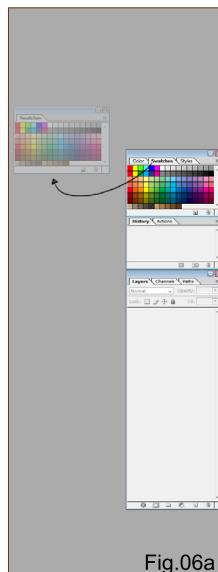


Fig.06a

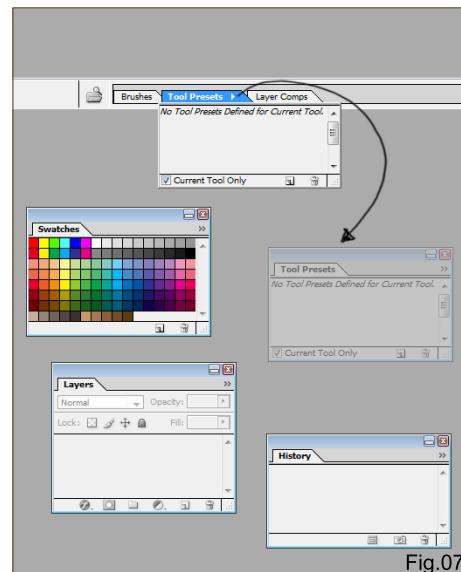


Fig.07

Next up, look at the grey area above the palettes; this is the docking well. There are some more tabs reading Brushes, Tool Presets and Layer Comps. You can click on a tab to open it, or in this case click and hold, then drag the tab onto your Workspace (Fig.07). Do this with the Tool Presets and Layer Comps – close them. Now click and hold the tabs in the palettes still on your Workspace and drag them into the docking well to dock them, freeing up the Workspace (Fig.08).

Of course, you don't have to do this, but I often feel the more space the better. And don't worry: the palettes we've just removed are not gone forever! You can call them up again by clicking on **Window** in the main menu (Fig.09) – all the ticked palettes are currently active, while the unticked ones are not. "Options" represents the bar under the main menu, including the docking well. At the bottom of this list you also find the Status Bar; if you feel you don't need to see how long PS is taking to process something, or don't need the little tips on how to use the tools that show up in it when a tool is selected, simply un-tick it, thus freeing up even more space at the bottom of your screen. To save these Workspace settings, just go to **Window > Workspace > Save Workspace...** (Fig.09a) and call it whatever you like. Not doing this may reset your Workspace to its default layout once you've closed PS.

We're almost done with setting up PS now. However, there is one more thing: colour management. This may not seem too big a deal to most people, but when you are painting, and especially when painting for print, it is. We can do this here: **Edit > Color Settings...**

A box will pop up (Fig.10). I don't know what the default settings here are; as you can see I've already set my colour profiles up. Tick the box next to Advanced Mode – this will give you more options. I've got my Working Spaces set to sRGB, but another setting called AdobeRGB works too. The reason I have mine on sRGB is because I like saving my paintings for viewing on the internet without loss of colour, and found that if I set my Working Space Profile to AdobeRGB it greys out the colours of paintings saved for the web. Don't ask me why – I don't know.

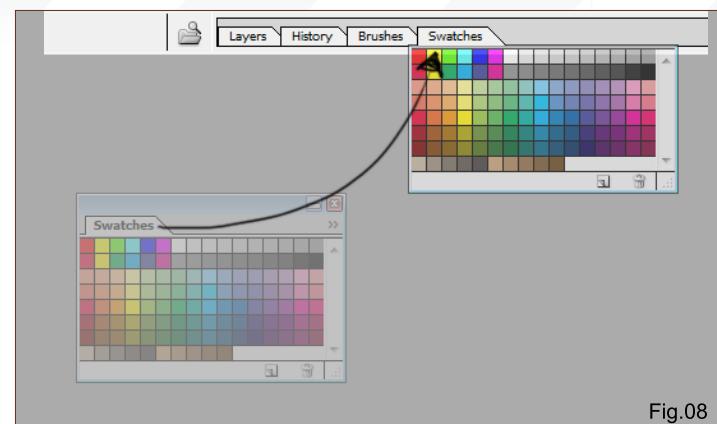


Fig.08

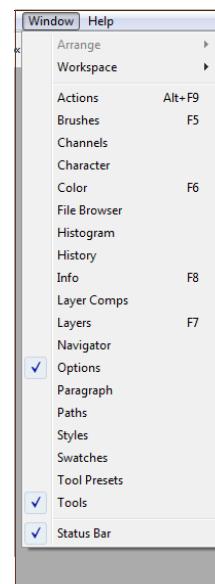


Fig.09

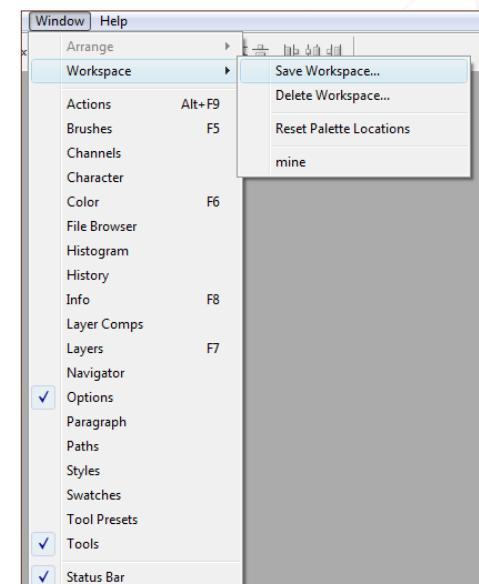


Fig.09a

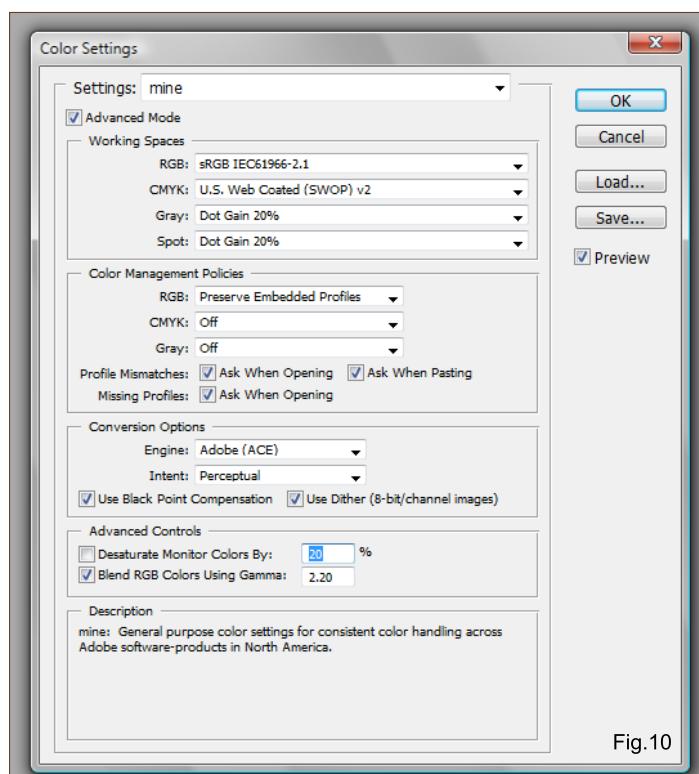


Fig.10

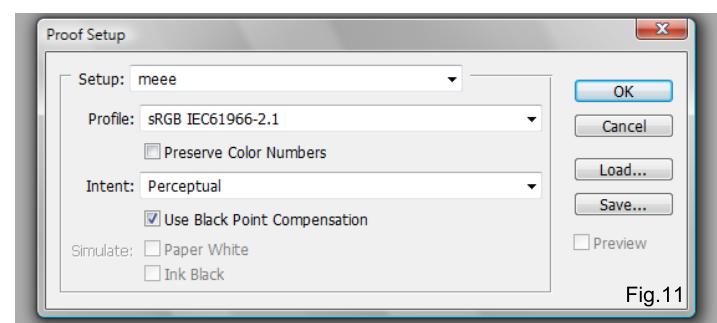


Fig.11

All in all the settings are quite straightforward, but here you could in theory set the profiles for certain things, for example if you have been commissioned by a publisher to paint something for print and they have specific requirements. The profiles you choose here correspond to different settings of printers. If you were to paint a picture in RGB, but a printer is set to CMYK, you will notice a difference in colours, which is not always favourable. Once you've finished setting things up, click Save and give your custom profile a name.

Next up, go to the main menu and click on **View > Proof Setup > Custom**. Another box will pop up. I've already set mine (Fig.11). You'll

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see in the dropdown menu you will have a lot of options. Choose the same colour profile you chose before. You can also save this and call it whatever you want.

Sticking with colours, most screens these days are pretty good with them. Some – namely laptop screens – are terrible, or at least I yet have to find a laptop that gives me good colours without adjusting them. Another thing I've found is that glossy screens (the shiny ones, looking all pretty and stuff and great for leaving fingerprints on) are also not that great when it comes to using them for painting, because they tend to make dark colours appear a little lighter than they should be due to the reflection and "crystal bright" technology these things advertise. But that's just me.

TIP: By the way, did you know that it's not very good to paint digitally in a completely dark room? The lack of surround light makes the colours seem a lot more vivid than they actually are, thus making fine nuances, especially in dark colours, more apparent. Also, it's not good to have your computer opposite a window or strong light source. The perfect position for a screen is against a wall, with soft but adequate light coming either from the left or right.

Anyway, colours ... Something you may want to do, no matter how brilliant you think your screen is, is calibrate it. Calibration means adjusting the screen so it gives you the closest match to actual colours as possible – useful for print. You can do this with Adobe Gamma, a programme that usually comes installed on your computer upon purchase, at least on a PC anyway. You can find it in your computer's control panel. If you're using Vista like me, click on "Classic View" in the side panel – you will then find Adobe Gamma in the top row (Fig.12).

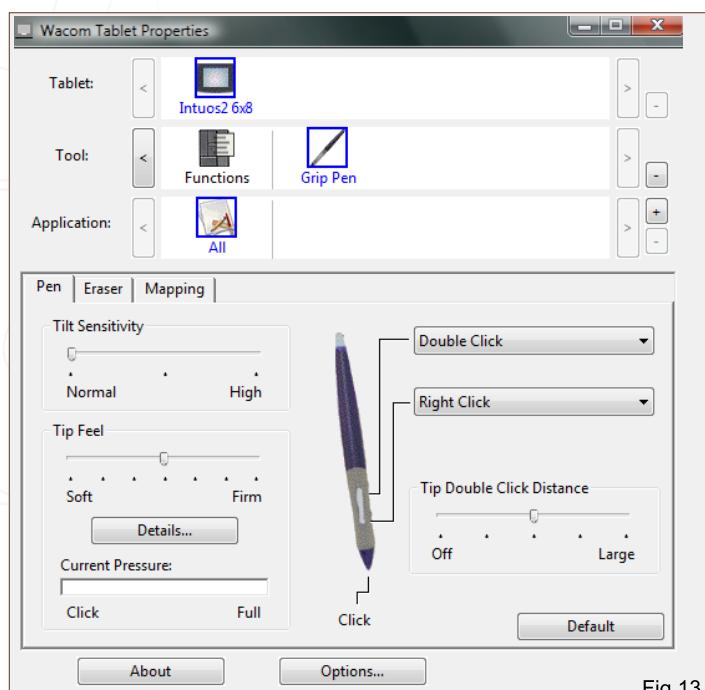


Fig.13

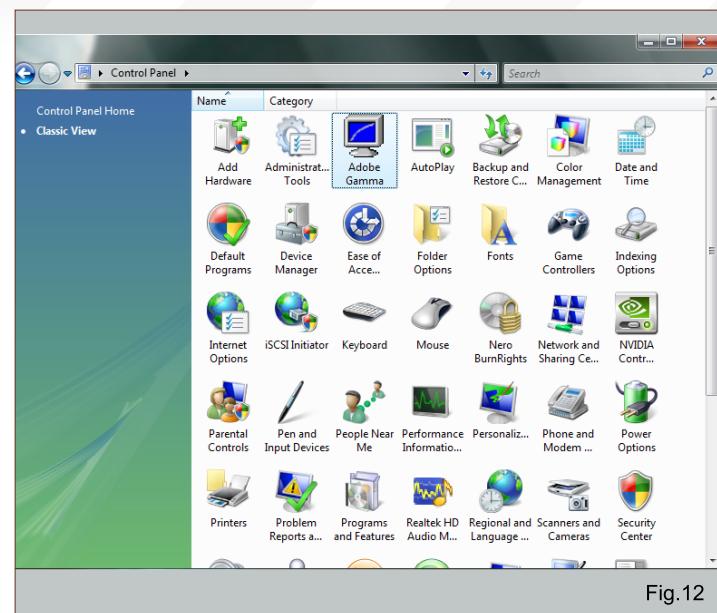


Fig.12

If you click on it, you will get a pop-up box that offers you a couple of choices: Step-by-Step Wizard, or setting it up manually in the control panel. The wizard is pretty good, so go with that one as it explains the different steps to you. In the next window you will need to choose a colour profile – load the same one that you've chosen in Photoshop. The next one is pretty self-explanatory; just do what the programme tells you to do. The next one will ask you to set the Phosphores. Do not change anything there unless you know what is set by default to be wrong. The next window asks you to adjust the Gamma. Do this according to the explanation, and then set the Gamma at the bottom to 2.20. Next up is the Hardware White Point. You can measure it – and that's actually quite fun. Just follow the instructions on the screen. Some screens are naturally warmer than others when it comes to colours, meaning that their whites will seem yellow, rather than blue, which would be cold. Adjusting this helps a lot, as you want a neutral colour appearance, however it can also totally derail your colours for other people when they view your paintings on their screens which will not be the same as yours. The next window lets you Adjust the White Point. Just set it to "Same as Hardware". And the next window lets you see what things looked like before, and after. If you are happy with the result, click on Finish and save your profile under a new name.

Great! That's all that out of the way. Go make some tea or coffee, you deserve it (and will need the caffeine to keep yourself awake whilst following all this technical stuff, no doubt).

What's next? – Your graphics tablet. Wondersome things, they are. I tend to say that the pen behaves like a retarded pencil, especially when you have one with a plastic nib (which is usually the default nib). But no worries, if you've never used a tablet before, or disregarded it as something you cannot possibly work with, try again – you will get used

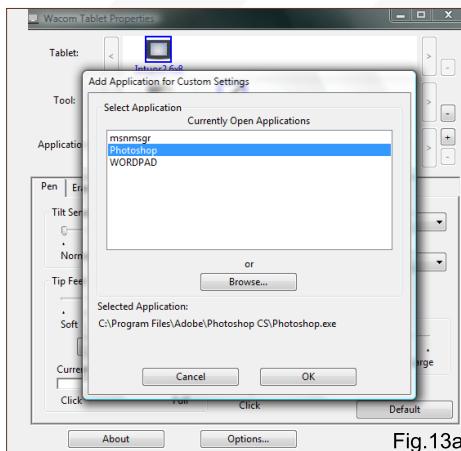


Fig.13a

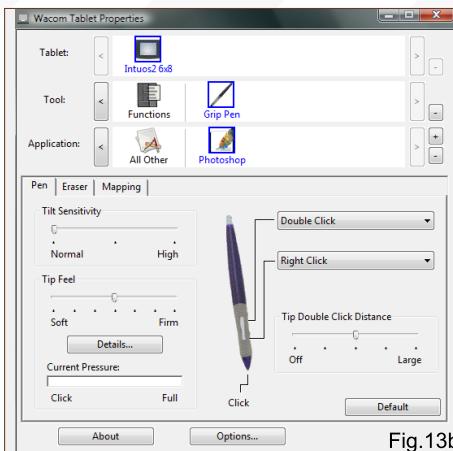


Fig.13b

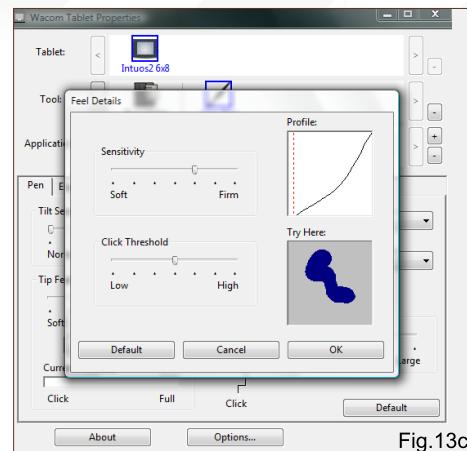


Fig.13c

to it, and painting with a mouse is a recipe for wrist cramps. It just takes a bit of practice. You'll never want to see your mouse again after a while.

Wacom has many different tablets to choose from, so pick carefully. Yes, the Cintiq looks cool, but it still won't make you a better painter. And no, you don't need a massive sized tablet just because you have a massive screen. It also doesn't really matter if you have a widescreen monitor but not a widescreen format tablet. Whatever you've got, it will work.

So, you've got your tablet plugged in and your pen poised. Use the disk – if there was one – that came with your tablet and install the drivers. – Don't have the disk anymore? Go to the Wacom website and download your driver. Your tablet does work without one, but it will act like a mouse rather than a tablet, and that's not what we want here.

Open the driver for your tablet; you will find it in the Wacom folder in your Programmes folder (Startup > Programs...). My tablet setup menu may look different to yours, but the basics are the same (Fig.13). At the top it shows you the Tablet you've got, beneath that are the Tools, and beneath that the Applications. Select the Grip Pen in the Tools if it isn't already selected, and in Applications we have to add PS. To do this, click on the + (or on "Add" depending on your driver menu) next to the Application row. This will open another small window that

lets you select or browse your programmes (Fig.13a). Browse your folders for Photoshop – you will usually find this here: Computer > C:\ > Program Files > Adobe > Photoshop > Photoshop. Hit Open. Photoshop will now show as a path in the Selected Application at the bottom of the box. Click OK. – PS will now be listed in your Applications (Fig.13b).

To set up your tablet for PS, click on the Photoshop icon in your Applications. First up, make sure to set up your pen's Sensitivity or "Tip Feel" – I'd recommend setting it to something softer, rather than firm. This will make it easier to paint, as you won't need to press down so hard on your tablet that you end up scratching the surface! These settings are different for everyone, so I cannot tell you more than that; play with it, see what you like best. For more options on that one, click the "Details" button. A new box will pop up where you can even try and scribble something, and the driver will adjust the settings for you, though

I find it's not always very accurate. The settings I normally use make the pen strokes seem stupidly soft (Fig.13c). When you are done with that, click OK to close the box. Staying with the Pen tab, you can also set up the buttons on your pen – there are dropdown menus for both the top and bottom one. I have a tendency to accidentally click the bottom button when I work, so I choose to disable it. However, a right-click is always useful, also when working in PS, so the top button I set to that (Fig.13d). Also make sure to set up the Eraser in the same way as the pen, in the Eraser tab. Once you're done with this, you could close the tablet driver Window without further ado. But – and there is always that niggling little bit – checking all the other settings and adjusting them to your preference is something you may want to think about. Like having a look at the Mapping tab – this is quite important as it lets your tablet correspond to your screen, or portions of your screen, or even two screens (Fig.13e). The settings you see in the Fig.13e are the ones I recommend.

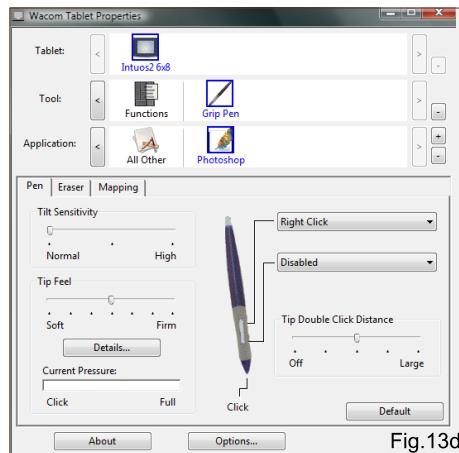


Fig.13d

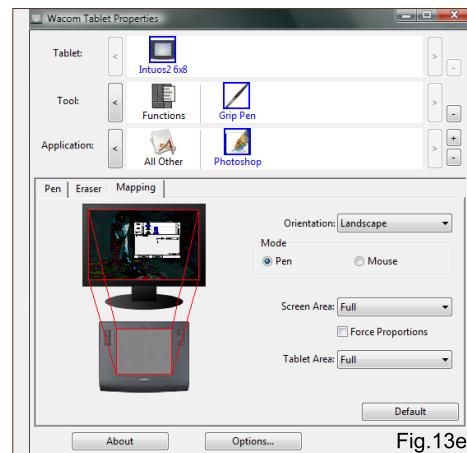


Fig.13e

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2d
artist

Ticking the "Force Proportions" box means your screen shape (widescreen, square, etc.) will force itself on the tablet surface, which usually results in parts of your tablet being cut off and thus rendered useless. And no, as said before, it doesn't matter if you have a widescreen but your tablet is square: a perfectly drawn circle will not suddenly become an ellipse on your screen if you don't force the proportions.

You're technically done now, and can close the driver window (you may have to apply the changes in certain cases first), but you could also set up your shortcut keys if your tablet has those. For mine, there isn't much setting up to do, rather a decision to be made if I want them activated. To do this, click on Functions in the Tool row, and select Photoshop in the Application row (Fig.13f). At the bottom you have two tabs, one for Tablet Menu, the other for the Pop-up Menu. Choose the Tablet Menu, and there you should be able to set up your shortcut keys. If you have an Intuos 2 that is smaller than A4 (like me), you won't see any shortcut keys printed on your tablet surface, but if you hover the pen along the top edge of the active surface you will notice some "keys" pop up in the top part on your screen going from 1 to 13. Newer tablet versions have actual keys on the tablet. These can be useful when you're working in PS as some major functions are applied to these keys, and it saves you having to

navigate through the menus. However, I never use my keys – force of habit. Someone buy me an Intuos 4 and I will.

Oh, and you can of course repeat all this for "All Other" applications, and add more programmes to the list, too. I find it useful to set the pen up for All Other as well, because I use my pen for everything, including browsing.

TIP: *When navigating with the pen – browsing or within Photoshop – you don't need to drag it over the tablet's surface and in repeated strokes at that, as though you're using a mouse. You can just hover with the pen over the tablet to move the cursor, or lift it up completely and set it down somewhere else to get your cursor there. And if you're wondering how to do a click or double-click without using the pen button, try tapping your pen on the tablet. Tapping once is a click, and tapping twice double-clicks. Ah, and I know this may seem like a stupid thing to say, but you can put your hand on the tablet like it is a piece of paper when handling the pen, even if it's a Cintiq (though you may want to wear a half-glove for that one to prevent hand-and fingerprints).*

Now that we've got the rather tedious stuff out of the way, let's head back over into Photoshop for a little while before I draw this chapter to a close.

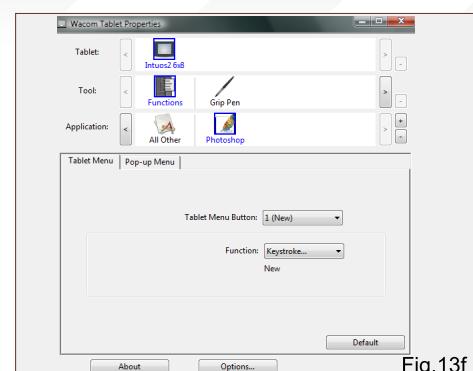


Fig.13f

originally wanted to explain some canvas settings here, but decided that it can wait until the next chapter. Not because it's not important, but because it would most probably bore the hell even out of myself right now. Besides, I'd rather give you something in closure that you can play around with until the next instalment: brushes, and how to use them.

Before we can play with brushes, we need to open a new file, and to do that we simply click on **File > New....** A box pops up showing the dimensions and other settings of the new file we are about to create. The Default Photoshop Size is rather small to work on, even when not really working on anything in particular, so click on the arrow next to the Preset and choose something else (Fig.14); Letter is a nice size for practicing on, or A4, or if you'd rather have it smaller 1024 by 768 pixels should be an option, too. There are some more settings, I know, but as said before we will ignore these for now. If your Background

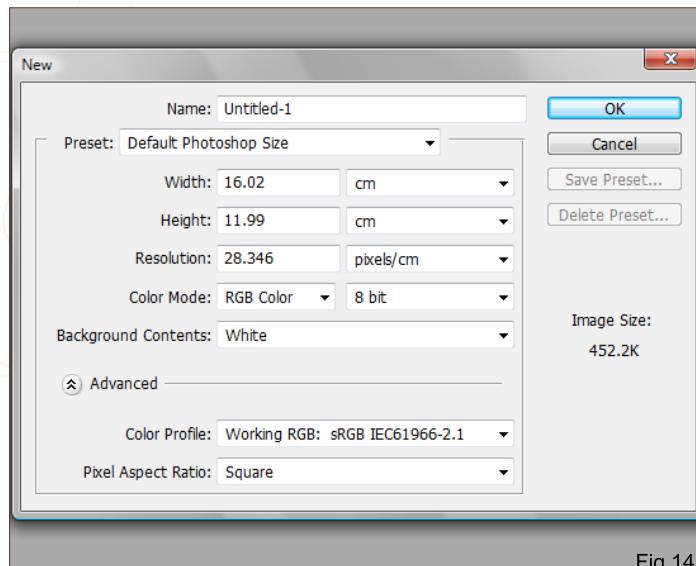


Fig.14

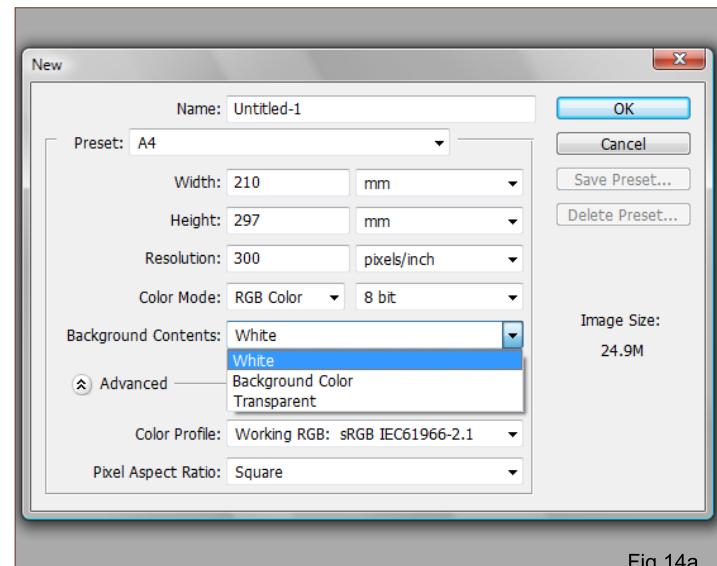


Fig.14a

Contents are set to Transparent, you will want to change this by using the dropdown menu next to it (Fig.14a).

Now that we have our canvas ... Wait, a couple of things first to keep confusion away: The canvas will most likely be shown scaled to fit onto your screen, and you can change that by going to **View > Zoom In/Out** – there are shortcuts for this too, which are noted next to the actions and can save time. I will not mention every shortcut there is; you have eyes, you can read (Fig.15). And to choose or change the colour you are going to paint with, you can do two things: either just call up the Swatches Palette in your docking well and pick a colour from that (more on that in later chapters), or ... see the little squares at the bottom of your tools palette? The one on top is your foreground colour (that's the one your pen uses), the one behind it is the background colour. To exchange the two, click on the little double arrow. To change your painting colours, click on the foreground colour square and you get your Colour Picker. You can pick your shade in the square, and with the slider next to it you can move through the entire spectrum of colours (hues) available (Fig.16). When you've picked your colour, simply hit the OK button. Easy!

Right then, where was I? – We have our canvas, and colours, now we need brushes. Select the Paintbrush in your tools palette.  Try scribbling something on the canvas – if it feels too hard, change your pen settings to something softer, and vice versa. And if you end up with a dotted scribble rather than an actual smooth line, this is due to the brush settings which we shall have a look at now. Bear with me here, it may seem a bit complex as I will try and explain everything, but isn't really.

To choose a brush you can do two things: you can either click the arrow next to the Brush in your Options bar (Fig.17), or right-click on your canvas and the Brushes palette will magically appear floating on your Workspace. If you did

the right-click thing and don't know how to get the Palette off your Workspace, try tapping your pen once on an empty spot on your Workspace. I love using this second method as it saves me having to move my hand off the canvas. Those of you with newer tablets than me are lucky, because you have the aforementioned preset buttons on yours.

Anyway, the Brushes palette! Once again, I will go into using this to full advantage in the next instalment, but for now I want to stick to the plain old round Paintbrush anyway, as it best shows all the things there are to know about Brush Settings. Now, there are lots of different settings for your brushes, and I will not go through all of them as many are quite self explanatory, and besides, where's the fun if you don't discover things for yourself? However, covering the ones that are most useful and most often used in painting, I will explain – in pictures. Because it's better to show than just to tell you, and you won't have to go searching for the corresponding figures this way [Grin].

After selecting a round brush, clicking on the Brushes tab in the docking well will pull up the Brush Settings:

The work has only just begun...

In next month's issue I will be showing you how to adjust Canvas settings, as well as the most widely used settings for scanning drawings and adjusting them to work further on them, all about the use of Layers, how to work with the Swatches and the Color Picker, how to choose the right colours and make them work, as well as how to create your own custom brushes and what you can do with them.

But right now, it's time for you to play with what you've learned so far. And when I say play, I mean play: just go wild with the Brush Settings and try everything. This will not only get you accustomed to each one of the settings, but also get you used to your pen, which from now

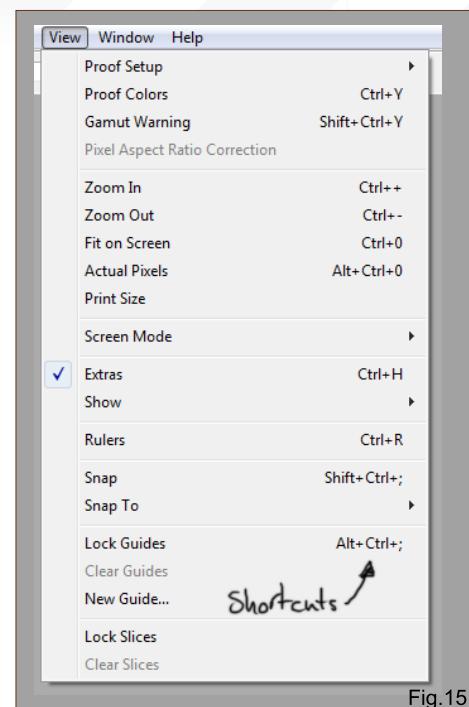


Fig.15

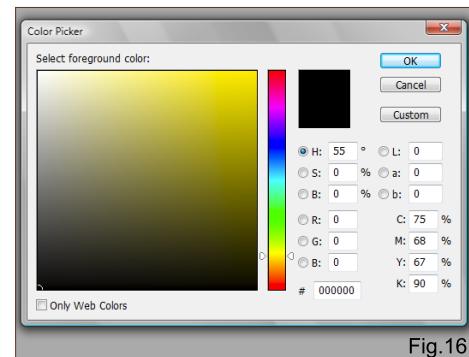


Fig.16

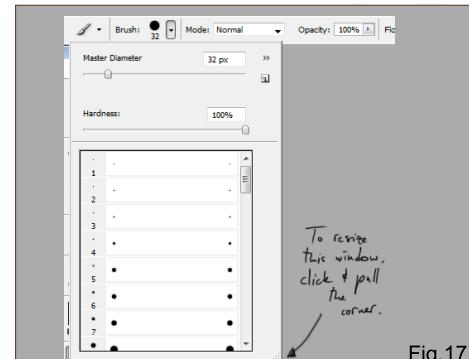


Fig.17

on will be your most treasured tool of all. It is magic, and you're on your way to making that magic happen now!

Nykolai Aleksander

For more from this artist visit

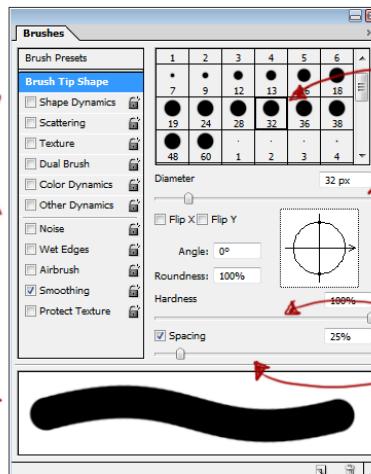
<http://www.admemento.com/>

Or contact them at:

x@admemento.com

Fun settings that can be extremely useful for various things.

A preview of your selected brush and how it will behave if used.



Here is the brush you selected. You can of course select other currently loaded brushes here, too.

The size of your brush can be adjusted here.

These options here affect the shape of your selected brush in multiple ways.

The Hardness dictates if your brush has crisp edges (100%), or soft fuzzy edges (0%).

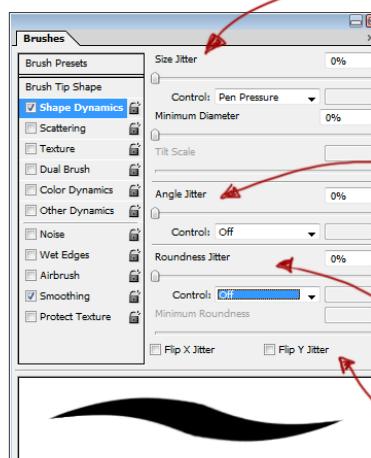
The Spacing - when ticked - allows you to space out the times of your brush making a mark on the canvas, with 0% being a seamless line.

The **Shape Dynamics** are a very useful setting:

They can create a tapered brush stroke, as well as various other things like change the roundness and angle of the brush.

NOTE:

All the settings can be used together, or separately, including the slider settings and drop down menus.



The Size Jitter controls the tapering of a brush. You can either set this manually with the slider for a more random result, or use the dropdown menu to choose something more controlled:

Fade - the brush stroke fades from original size to minimum size.

Pen Pressure - depending on the pressure you exert with your pen on the tablet, the size changes

Pen Tilt - depending on the tilt of your pen, the size changes

Stylus Wheel - only works if you have the Wacom Airbrush Pen, as this has a wheel.

The Angle Jitter comes in useful when you need variation in your brush strokes, especially when working with texture brushes. The slider again gives you a random result, while the dropdown provides the same controlled options as the Size Jitter, plus these gems:

Initial Direction - This keeps the brush static, and thus at the same angle it was at when you started making the stroke, no matter if you draw wavy lines or spirals. Can come in useful for certain things.

Direction - This is another setting. It changes the angle of your brush according to your brush stroke. If you make a turn with your pen, the brush will follow. This is extremely useful when painting embellishments with special shape brushes on anything that is not flat, like fabric, scimitar or katana blades, or anything else you can think of.

The Roundness Jitter is great on its own, or in combination with the Angle Jitter. It basically squishes your brush, and this can be useful to create the illusion of lets say polka dots on a table top - they don't look round unless you look at them straight on. The slider once more gives you random results, while the drop down menu is the very same as the one for the Size Jitter.

Flin X and Flin Y Jitter are fun - when ticked they randomly rotate your

Other Dynamics are - despite a name that seems like an afterthought - probably the most important settings. Without them, you would have a hard time doing pretty much anything. They are the turpentine of digital paint, letting you dilute your colours and create layered washes.

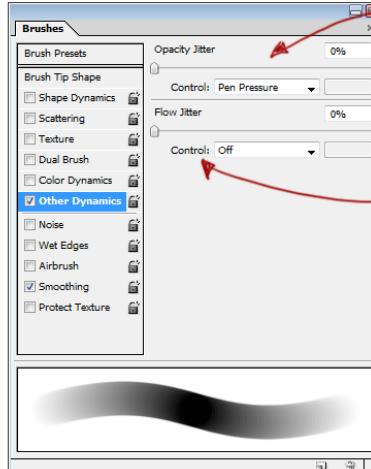
NOTE:

You can also set both Opacity and Flow manually in the Options Bar:

Opacity: 100% Flow: 100%

These come in useful when you want to use the Size Jitter, for example, on Pen Pressure, but also want the Opacity or Flow lowered at a constant level.

I often even combine this with the Opacity and Flow Jitter settings for even finer layers of colour that still show some variation.

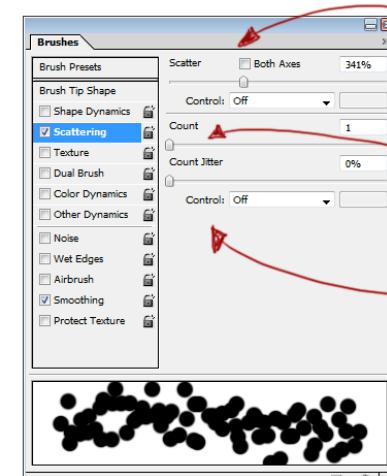


The Opacity Jitter controls the opacity of your brush, or the transparency if you will.

Setting this to Pen Pressure is the in and out of digital painting, as it lets you control how much paint you want on your canvas at any given point in time, although the slider option can give you some funky results too and can be useful for certain things.

The Flow Jitter is almost the same as the Opacity Jitter, but in essence controls the flow of the paint from your brush. If on, it is a bit denser than the Opacity Jitter - try it for yourself, you will see what I mean. Once again, the drop down menu gives you the same options as before, and I usually set it to Pen Pressure.

Scattering is great for quite a few things, from creating star fields to leaves on trees to freckles and textures.



Scatter lets you set the main action of the brush, either by using the slider, or the drop down menu which will give you the same options as with the previously discussed settings, or both.

Ticking Both Axes will make the brush stroke appear more linear and controlled, which can be useful for certain things.

The Count refers to the brush count - in effect, how many brush specks you see on the canvas. Raising the Count lets the scatter increase in density. This can be useful for painting the base of dense foliage or give an area just a hint of a texture while getting good coverage.

The Count Jitter only works if you choose to up the Count. It varies the count of brush specks on your canvas, either at random with the slider, or in a more controlled way with drop down menu.



“I wanted to end up with a warm painting, as well as a painting that looks and feels like a piece of art, rather than a manipulated or distorted photograph.”

aretha franklin

making of by Jason Seiler

We are pleased to present an exclusive article on the making of Jason Seiler's Aretha Franklin caricature. Jason takes us step-by-step through his painting process in Photoshop, from sketch to final piece, and we will also be welcoming him back to 2DArtst later this year for an interview – that'll be a treat for sure, as his portfolio contains some of the most stunningly painted caricatures you could hope to find!

making of aretha franklin

Created In:

Photoshop

Introduction

These are the steps I took while painting my recent caricature, 'Aretha Franklin'. The sketch was drawn in Photoshop (Fig.00), using a small round brush. For the painting I used Photoshop CS and a Wacom Cintiq; the size of the final painting is 13 inches wide by 14.5 inches high, at 300 dpi resolution.

Step 1

After I finished my sketch, I chose Select All, copied that layer and pasted another copy of the sketch above the background layer, one above the other. I then switched to my background layer, hit Select All again and deleted the sketch from the background layer. I then selected Layer 2, which had the sketch on it, and set that layer to Multiply.

"I rarely start with the same colours twice"

I painted in a flesh tone directly under the sketch layer so as not to lose my sketch lines.



Fig.00

The brush I started with was a size 13 round brush (Fig.01a – 01b). I made sure that Other Dynamics was turned on and that the Opacity Jitter was at 0%; Control was set to Pen Pressure, Flow Jitter set to 0%, and the Control

below the Flow Jitter was turned off. These settings gave me the control that I prefer. I usually paint with my Opacity set to 85-90% and my Flow set to 100%, although this sometimes differs depending on effect.

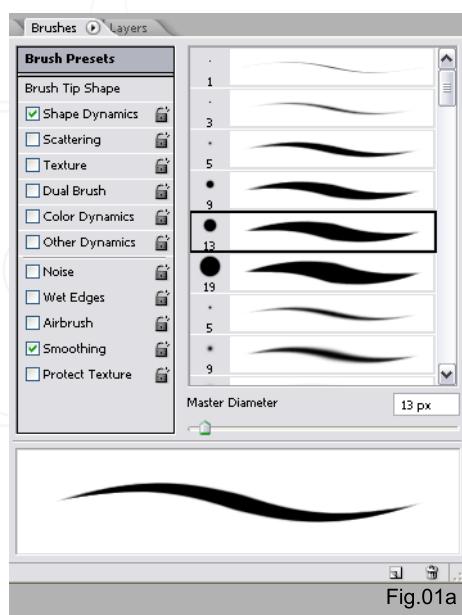


Fig.01a

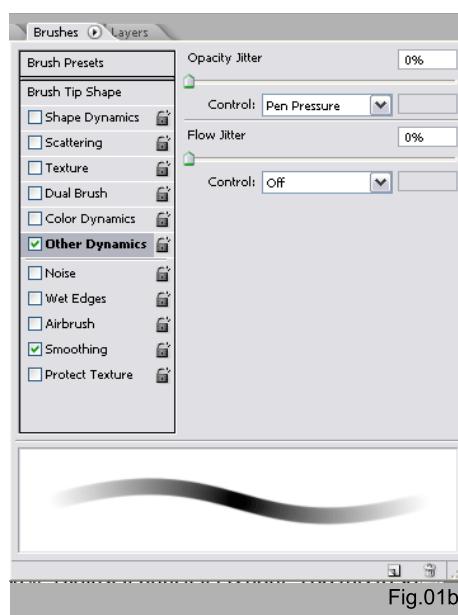


Fig.01b

I made sure that Shape Dynamics was turned off. The flesh colour I chose to use in RGB Mode was R: 190, G: 124, B: 104. I don't always start with this colour. In fact, I rarely start with the same colours twice because each subject I paint presents a new mood or feeling that I want to capture.

My photo reference had unnatural lighting and felt too pink. I knew from looking at my reference that I wanted to go in a different direction; I wanted to end up with a warm painting, as well as a painting that looks and feels like a piece of art, rather than a manipulated or distorted photograph. So I chose a violet red colour (R:

98, G: 17, B: 25) that I essentially filled the background with. I didn't want any whites in my painting just yet. Because I tend to paint from dark to light, the background here was used as a foundation to build from.

I created a palette layer at this point (Fig.01c). It's important to create a colour palette that has harmony. My main priority was getting the values right and I knew that if I could succeed in that, I could do just about anything with the colour. When I paint, I usually create a variation of red, yellow, and blue. With these three colours most colours can be created. You'll notice that in this painting my colours are very warm: reds, oranges, browns, violets, and greens.

To create my palette, I made a new layer that would remain on top of all the layers from this point on. This layer was used as my 'palette layer'. I selected my Eyedropper tool and picked a red-brown colour from my background. I then clicked my colour picker and chose a few more reds based off the red-brown that I chose, and then I created a small grouping of flesh-like reds

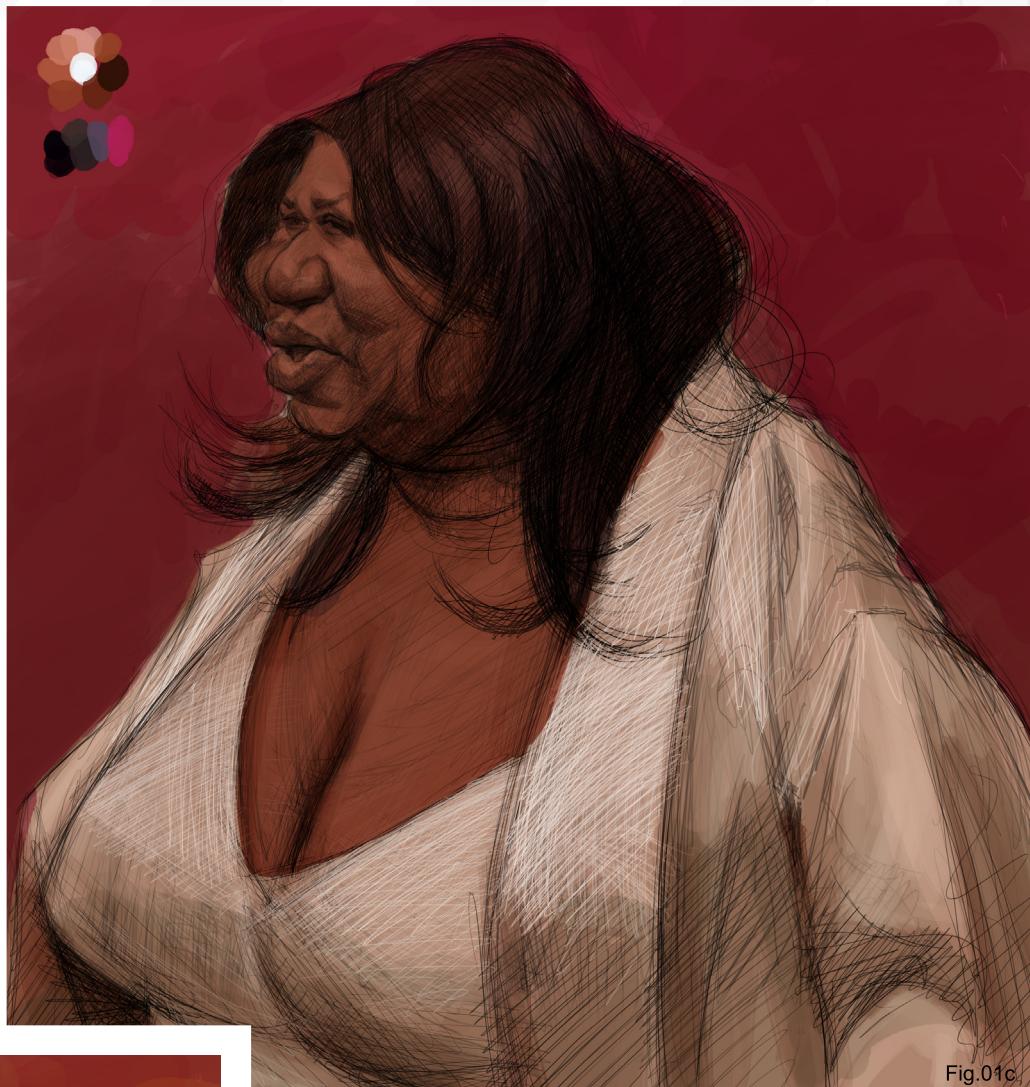


Fig.01c



Fig.02a

and browns. I did this by squinting my eyes while looking at my photo reference, and then choosing colour according to the values I saw while squinting my eyes. When I looked at my photo reference through squinted eyes, I saw reds, greens, violets, and blues, but I knew that I wanted a warmer painting for my final. So I create those colours and mixed my red-brown colour into all of them, creating harmony. This technique was similar to the 'pigment soup' technique that I sometimes use when painting with oils.

“Think of it as if you are sculpting, chipping away small pieces”

Step 2

What I typically do at this stage is use my Eyedropper tool to select the colour I've created for the background, and then use that colour to begin my block-in (Fig.02a – 02b). At this stage of the painting, I was mostly concerned about painting the correct values. It was also important, at this stage, to not zoom in too close. I chose to paint from a distance and used large brushes. This way I could focus on capturing shape and values, and merely suggest detail.

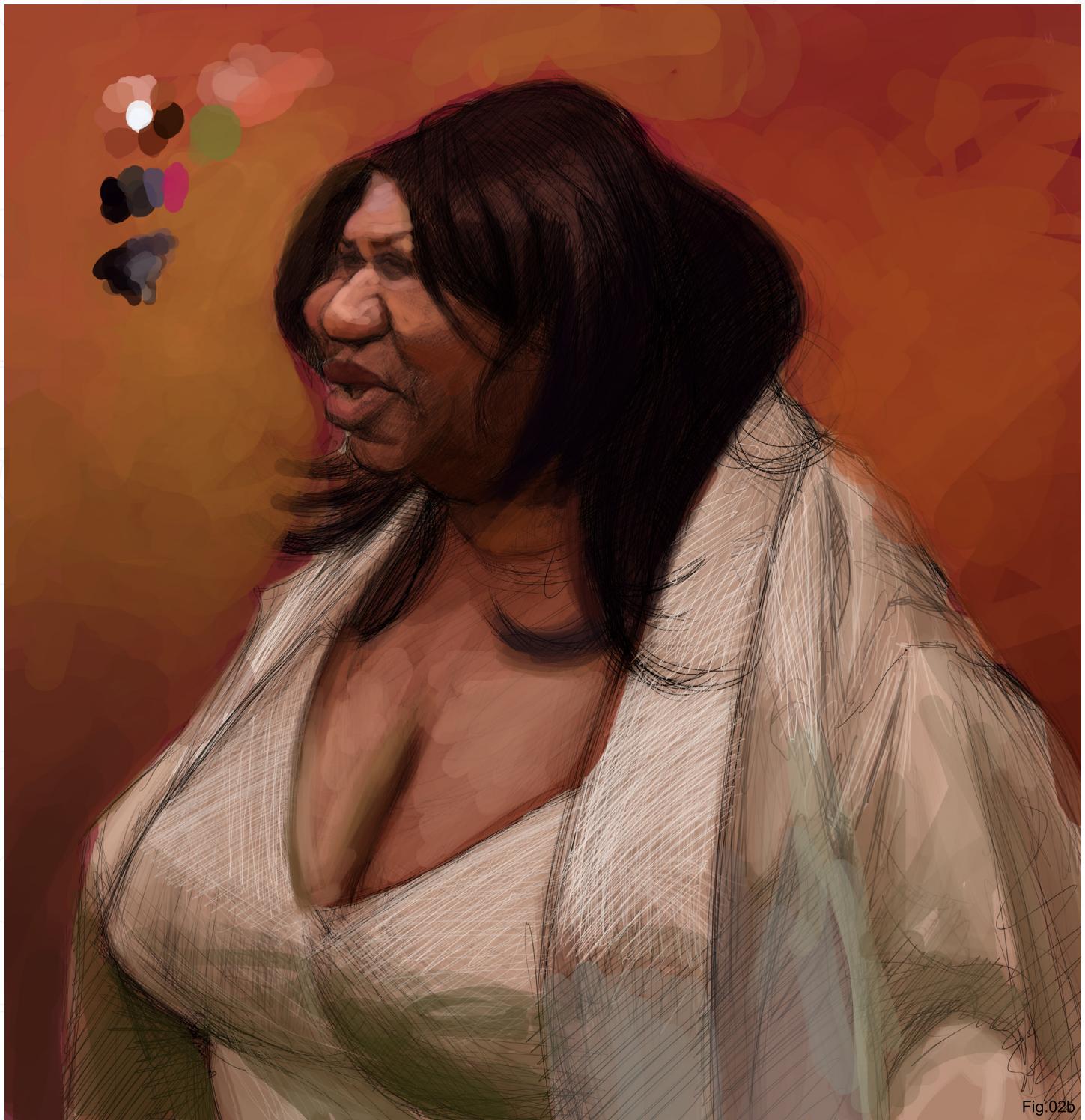


Fig.02b

Next, I created a new layer on top of the other layers and began to slowly paint over my sketch lines. By this point I'd created enough form and structure that I no longer needed my sketch lines. I also began to block in a bit of the background as well. The background was important to establish early on in the painting; it had to complement the portrait. The colours and values of the background will affect the colours

and values in your portrait, so it's important to work back and forth between the portrait and background while blocking in. Think of it as if you are sculpting, chipping away small pieces until the form appears.

I usually save my bright highlights and whites for later on in the painting and start first by establishing my darks and working lighter from

there. This stage is simply for me to create a balanced foundation for my block-in. Steps one and two take five to ten minutes – at most – to complete.

Step 3

I created another layer that would go directly under my "palette layer" but would remain on top of all the other layers. I began to paint on top

of my block-in; everything up until this point was used as a guide for me to follow as I built up layers of colour.

Next, I needed to establish my darkest darks and block those in. There was no need to zoom in; I worked at a distance and continued to use a large round brush. My technique when painting digitally is very similar to how I would paint traditionally with oils: start with bigger brushes, blocking in the largest shapes of darkest colour and value; as the painting progresses, I use smaller and smaller brushes. Also, I never stay in one area for too long. Painting from a distance with larger brushes helps you cover more ground in less time.

I established my darkest darks and at this point began to paint lighter values on her face and chest (Fig.03). I also started adding lighter, almost pure white value on her clothing. Notice

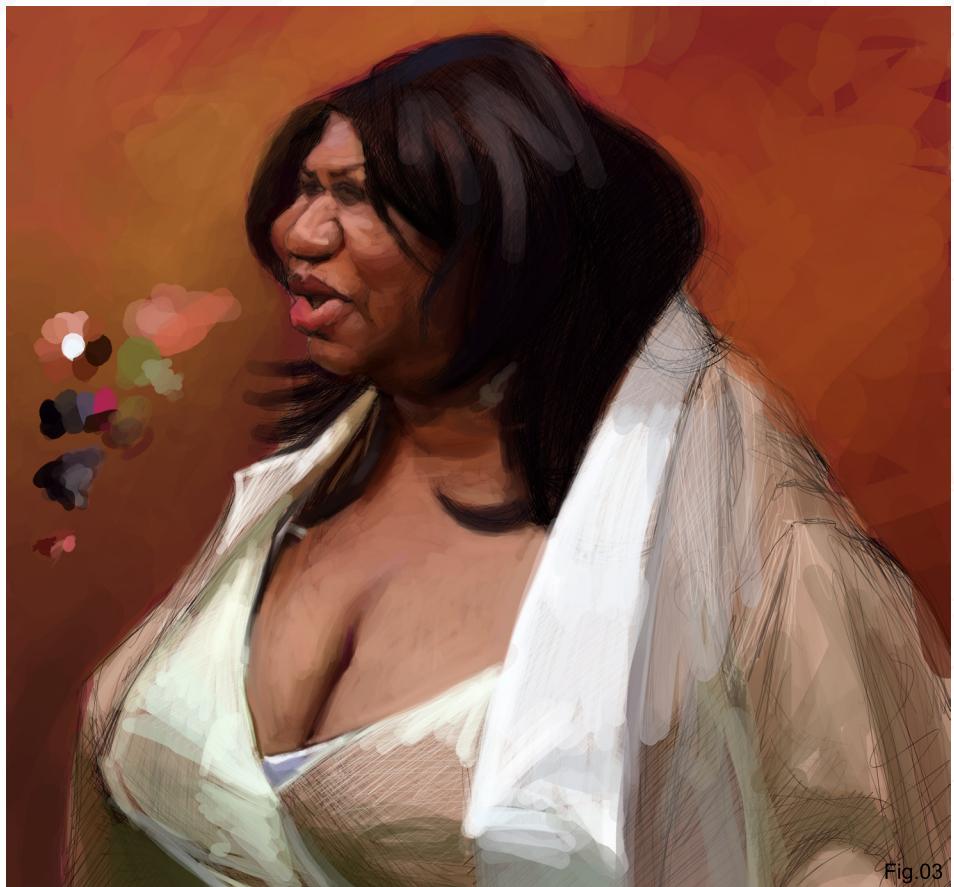


Fig.03

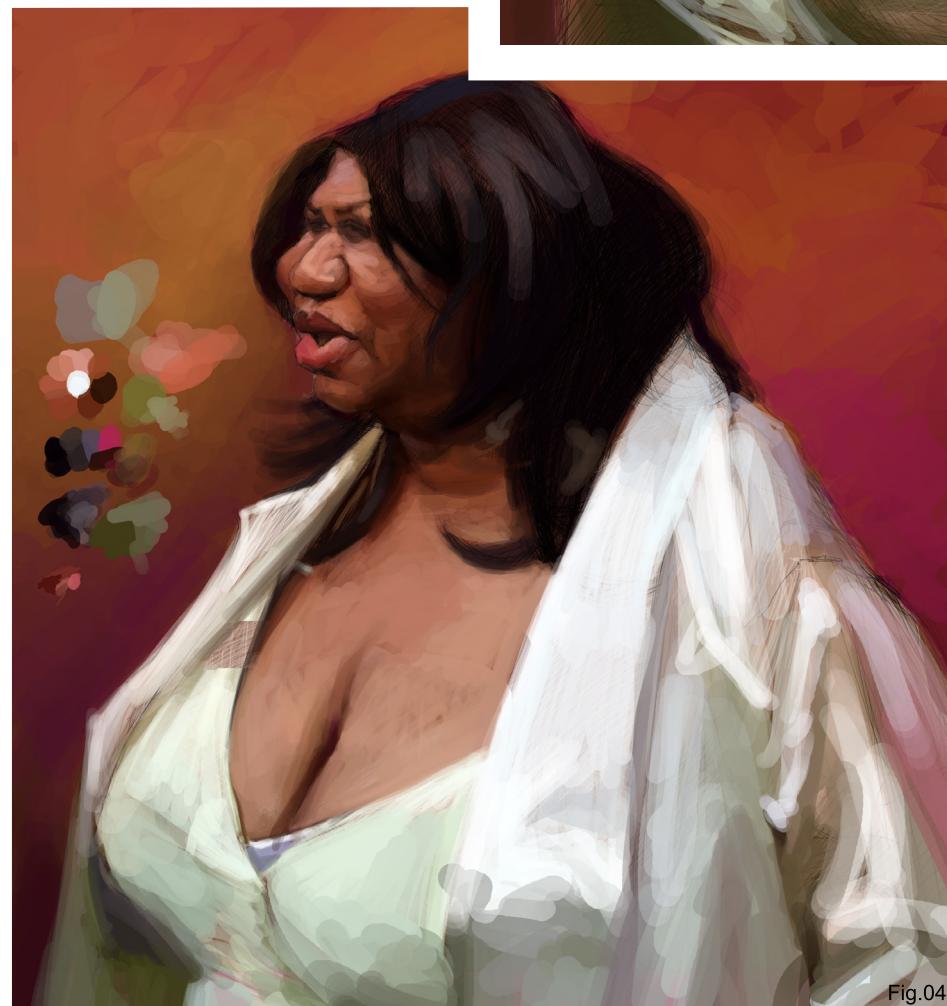


Fig.04

that I have not yet added any such values to her face, as I saved those highlights and reflective lights for later on. It's easy to become impatient and want to paint in highlights right way, but it's better to not get distracted by them and wait.

The reason I painted the almost white values on her clothing was so that I could later compare the lighter values in her face to the values on her clothing. I knew that there should not be any area on her face that shared values as white as those which exist on her clothing.

Step 4

As I continued to block in the painting, I found myself unsettled with the composition. This is one of the great things about painting digitally. With the Crop tool, I selected the entire canvas and then added a bit more to the bottom, giving Aretha additional girth (Fig.04).

Step 5

As the painting developed I continued with the same approach, squinting my eyes and mixing

colour to match the value and temperature that I desired for the piece. Still using a round brush, I began to zoom in to paint details. I then started to refine the mouth, eyes, nose, ears, and hair. You can start to see a softer transition on edges between values (Fig.05).

Step 6

I removed the palette at this stage because I had enough colours in my painting to work with. If I needed to change the value or saturation of a colour that I already had, I simply clicked on the colour picker and mixed or adjusted my colour there. Not much here has changed since Step 5 (Fig.06).

I began to use my favourite Photoshop brush, #24 (follow the brush settings mentioned in Step 1). Brush #24's marks and strokes feel more like a natural paint brush and I use it as such. This



Fig.05

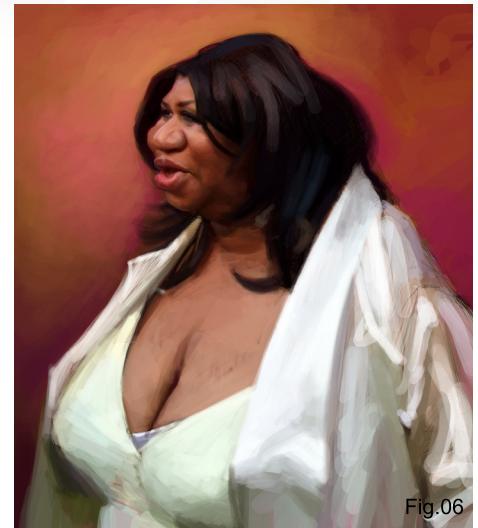


Fig.06

was the brush I used to finish the painting, with the exception of a soft round that I used for hair.

Step 7

I began to focus my attention on Aretha's face (Fig.07). Adjustments were made to her nose

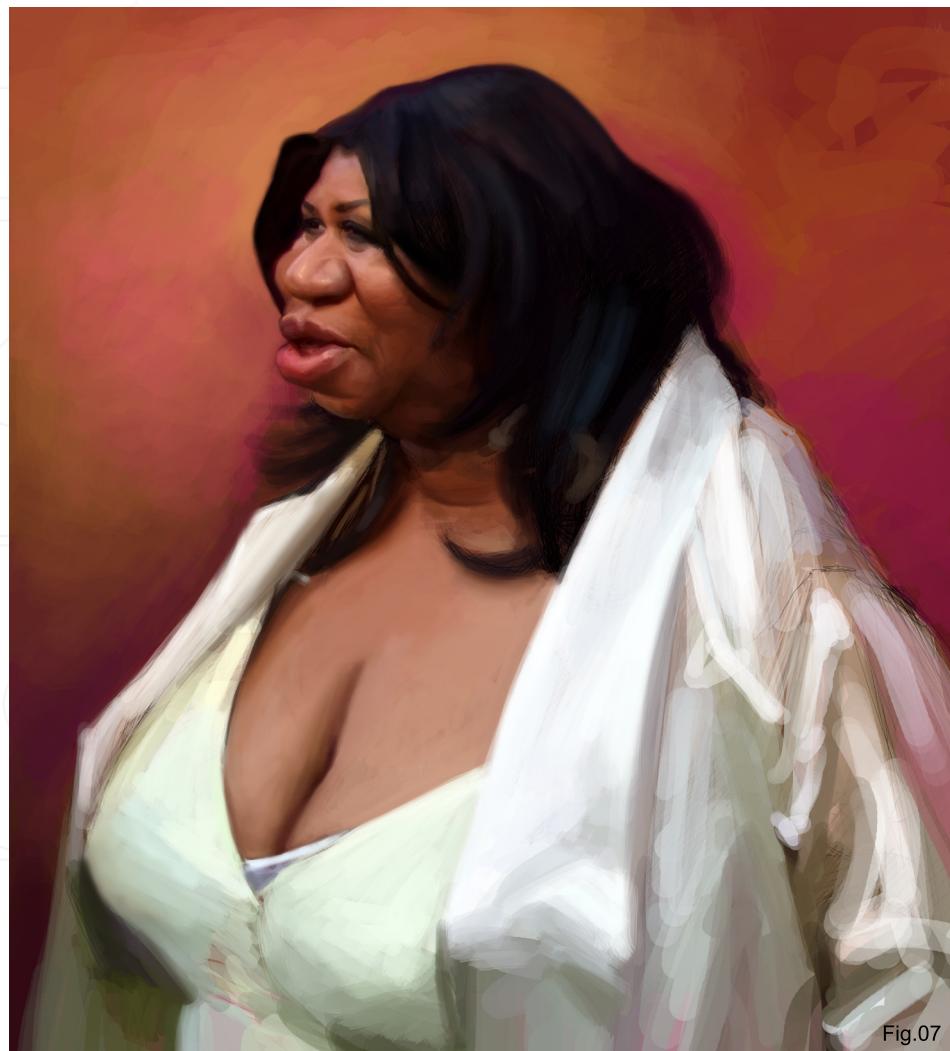


Fig.07

and right cheek, and I noticed that I could exaggerate her mouth a bit more, so I painted away the mouth and re-painted a new mouth lower on her face. This added more space between her nose and mouth, which is what I wanted. I also extended her mouth and bottom lip out a bit further, which enhanced both the likeness as well as humour. I continued to soften edges, adjust values and introduce additional lighter values to her face and clothing. I also began to soften her chest and hair.

“Squint your eyes for value, and open your eyes to see the colour”

Step 8

At this stage I freely zoomed in and out – zooming in for details, zooming out to have a look from a distance. It was important to often step back from the painting. With this painting it was not my intention to copy the colour I saw in my references. Instead, I wanted to focus on values and colour temperature. Squint your eyes for value, and open your eyes to see the colour.

I basically finished the face at this stage, and started to detail her chest and clothing (Fig.08).

Step 9

The painting was all but finished in this final step, with the exception of the hair and minor details of clothing and composition. For the hair, I created a new layer. This way, if I needed

to erase a section of hair that didn't feel right, it didn't ruin the rest of the painting. I painted the large mass of value and shape that I saw while squinting my eyes. I then blocked in the basic form or design of the hair a little bit darker than it needed to be. This way, when I painted smaller hairs on top, in a lighter value, it gave the illusion of depth. To add to this illusion, I also changed the size of my brush to differ the widths of the hairs. I used a Soft Round brush with a tapered point to paint smaller hairs. Keep it simple: study what hair does and then make it more interesting.

My goal with this painting was that it would feel more like a traditionally painted piece, rather than a digitally painted image. To get a more traditional look for the piece, I selected some texture from one of my oil paintings and dragged it on top of my painting. In my layers window, I selected Hard Light and set it to 47%. This effect changed my colours slightly from the previous step. Truthfully, this was something I've never done before; I enjoyed the look I was getting and decided to keep it. Don't be afraid to experiment with some of the tools to see what they can do, but be careful to not abuse



Fig.08

the computer. I feel that digital paintings look best when they're not so obviously digitally created. That's my preference anyway.

The painting was almost finished here and I felt once more that the composition could be better. So I selected my Crop tool and cropped a bit off the right side of the painting. For the final finishing touch, I wanted to add some noise and additional texture to the painting, so I selected a mid-tone grey, created a new layer and filled that layer with grey, making sure this layer was on the very top. I then selected Noise in the Filter menu and chose Add Noise. When using this tool you'll need to adjust the settings until they look good to you. I then selected Blur More in the Blur settings. I did this to soften the texture of the noise a bit. And finally, I changed my layer to Soft Light and brought the Opacity down to about 17% (Fig.09).

Final Thoughts

Well, that's it. Remember to have fun. Sketch, draw and paint from life as much as you can. Keep it simple. If you look at the design of my portrait you can see that my shapes and forms are basic and simple. When I combine strong values and colour to my basic design, the final appears more complicated than it really is.



Fig.09

Jason Seiler

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Seiler

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“I find that it’s much easier to get a unified colour scheme using larger brushes, rather than smaller ones.”



Yang Xueguo, painter of the surreal and the fantastical, gives us not only a wonderful insight into the creation of his image, *Concrete 7*, but also kindly shares with us his very own “Good Brush Set”, which he used exclusively to paint this piece in Photoshop.

CONCRETE 7

MAKING OF BY YANG XUEGUO

MAKING OF CONCRETE 7

Created In:

Photoshop

This image was painted with Adobe Photoshop using my "Good Brush Set", which you can download for free with this article. To start things off, I began by drawing a simple sketch on paper with the ideas I had in mind. The most important things were the design of the layout and the basic shapes, being sure to leave some empty space on the paper. Usually, ideas do not always look great in just a single minute; it takes some time (Fig.01).

I continued by scanning the sketch drawn on paper into Photoshop. Starting work on the image digitally, I began by adding a new layer above it and filling it with a dark red colour, and then painted some basic colour tones and contrast with a large brush. I find that it's much easier to get a unified colour scheme using larger brushes, rather than smaller ones. I then added some light and dark areas, using my "Good Brushes" #1 to #6 (Fig.02).



Fig.02



Fig.01



Fig.03

Moving on, I adjusted the whole image's colour tone to something close to yellow, choosing "Good Brush #5" to paint the main colours and add contrast. Good Brush #5 can easily paint the strokes with a blocky feel, which is very helpful when building up detail. At this stage I had to be sure not to forget to add some cool colours to the base warm colour, just to make the colour tone richer and give more variety to the image as a whole (Fig.03).

Here I used the small brushes to add some detail; I always use Good Brush #5 and my textured brushes to easily paint textures and shapes. I gave the image two lighting scenarios, with one light being directed from the top, and

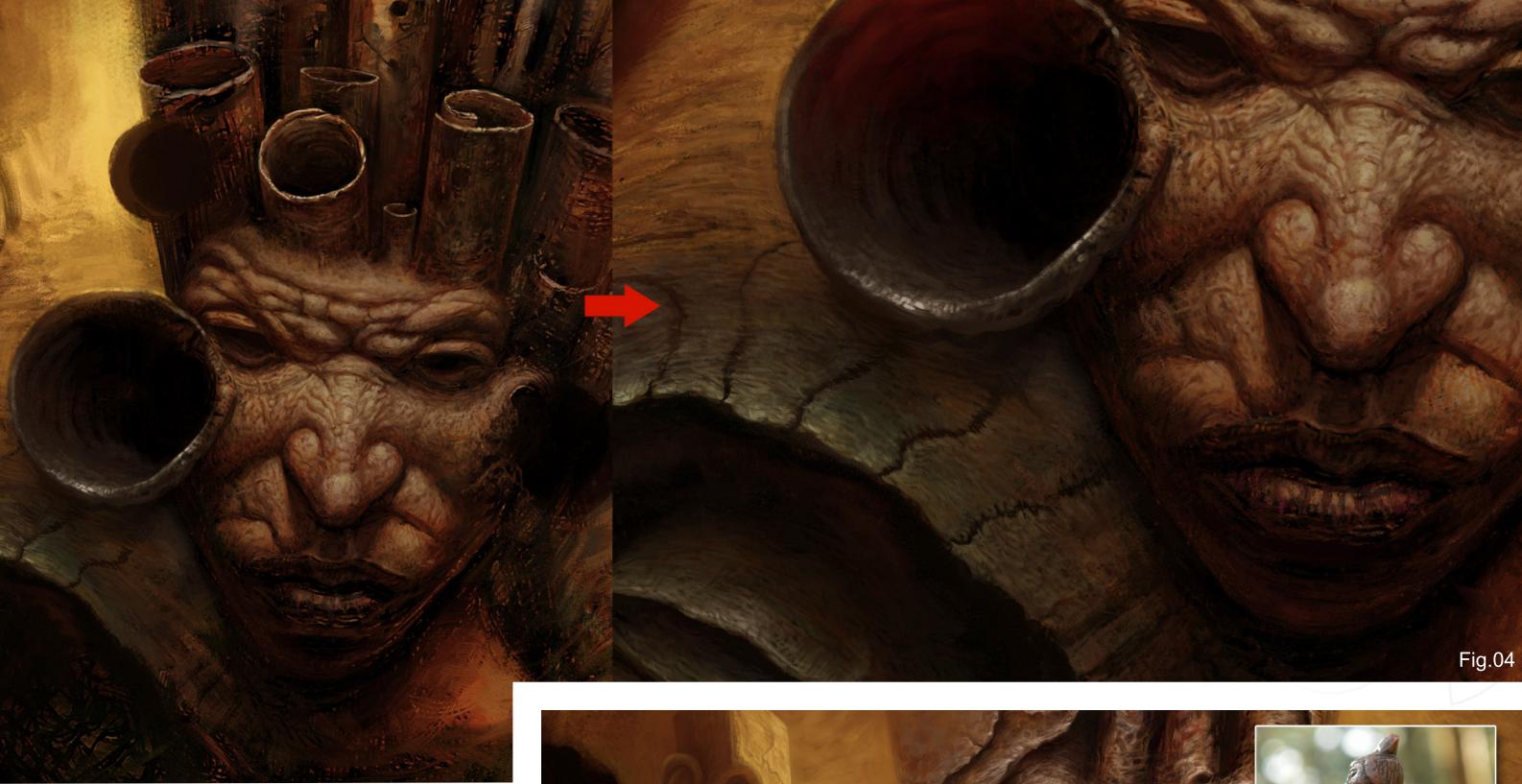


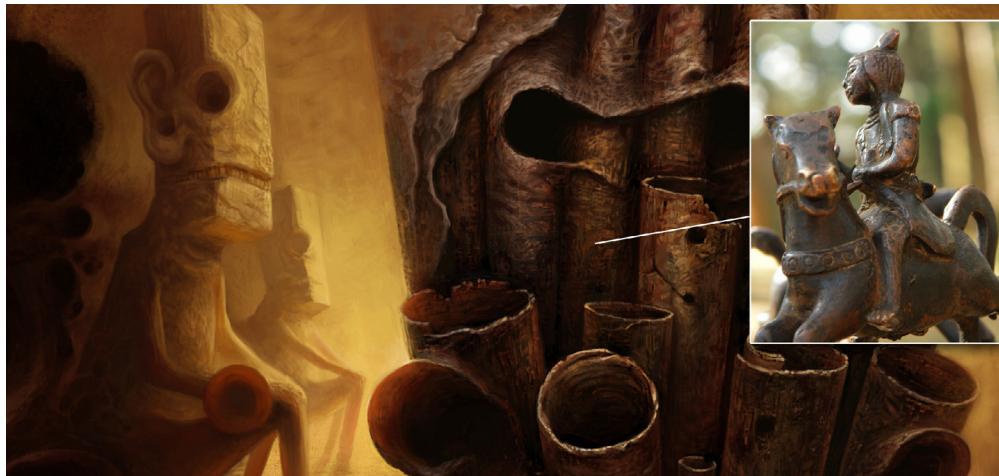
Fig.04

the second from the back. All of the shadows in the image were dependent upon the direction of these two light sources (Fig.04).

“The most important step here is colour blending”

You can use reference photos to help you paint detailed textures and shading, but be careful not to miss out the smaller shapes in your image, as every object has its own structure, even the smallest. At this stage of painting I'm using my texture brush to paint (Fig.05).

The most important step here is colour blending, and I have made some colour blending smudge



tools in my Good Brush Set which you can check out when you download the brush pack with this article. You can use these to easily blend the transition between your colours. Using this method, the rough strokes will be smoothed easily and quickly (Fig.06).

Here I used the “FX Brush” to fade the shapes away from the eyes, which was a good way to define the levels of the scene, and to enhance the atmospheric and optical effects. Using the “Glow Brush” I then added some bright areas to strengthen the expression of the image, paying

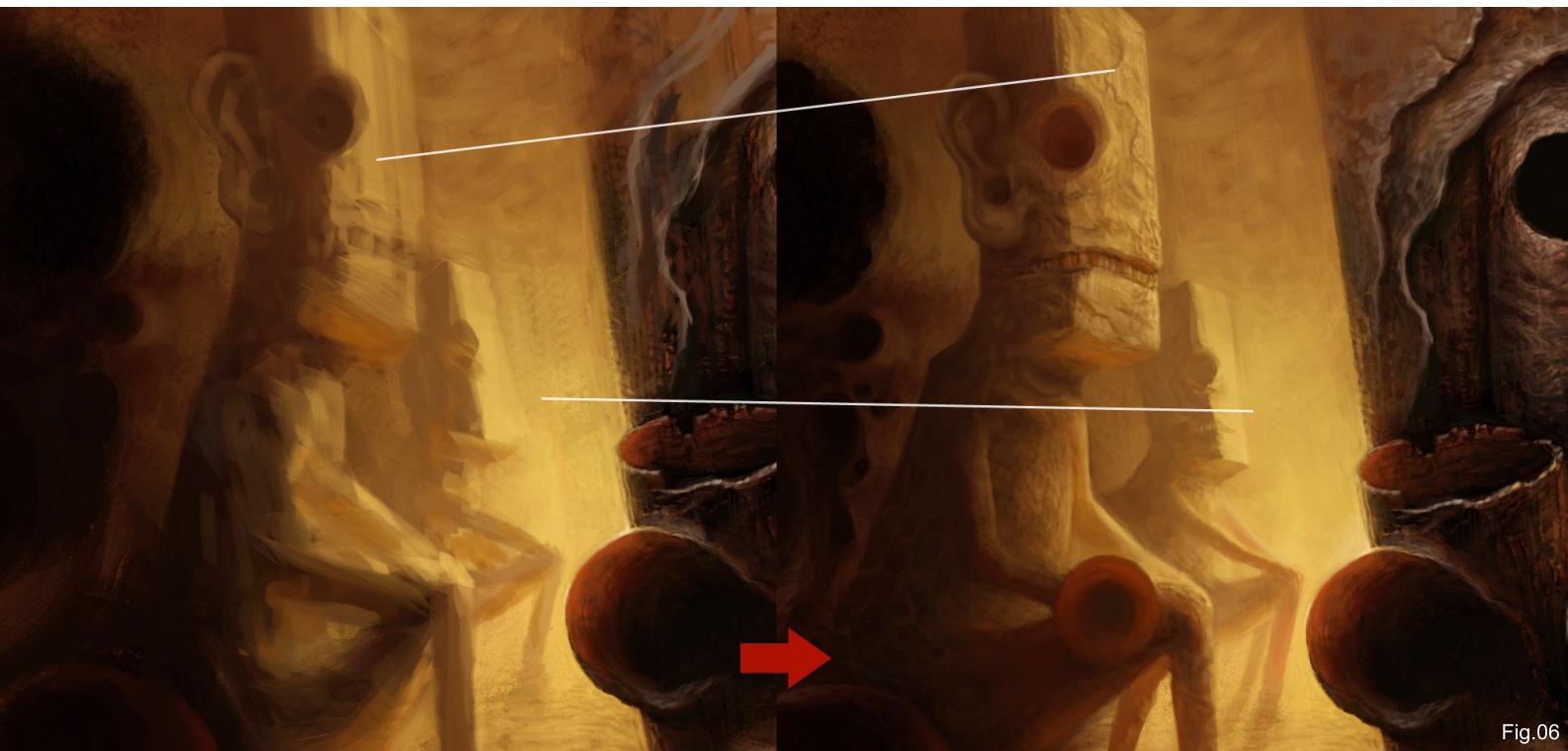


Fig.06

attention not to forget to switch the brush's mode to Screen or Color Dodge to give it a lightening effect (Fig.07).

"This can adjust both contrast and tone at the same time"

Using the "Smoke Brush" or "Fog Brush" I painted in some smoke effects, because without this I felt the image would look too still. Using the FX Brush we can easily add large effects to an image, such as light, energy, magic, and so on. This is a particularly good way to make the image look more extensive (Fig.08).

Finally, using the Levels tool, I adjusted the colour and contrast of the image. Another way of adjusting the colour is to add a new solid colour layer and changing the blending mode to Overlay. This can adjust both contrast and tone at the same time (Fig.09).



Fig.09

And here is the finished image (Fig.10).

Hopefully you will have found the breakdown of my workflow for this image useful, and I hope you will enjoy using my Good Brush Set. Thanks for reading!

Note from the Editor: The Good Brush Set which you can download with this tutorial has kindly been provided by Yang Xueguo for your personal use. you may use the brushes for any free or commercial projects.

Yang Xueguo

For more from this artist visit:

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Fig.07



Fig.08



© Yang Xueguo Fig.10

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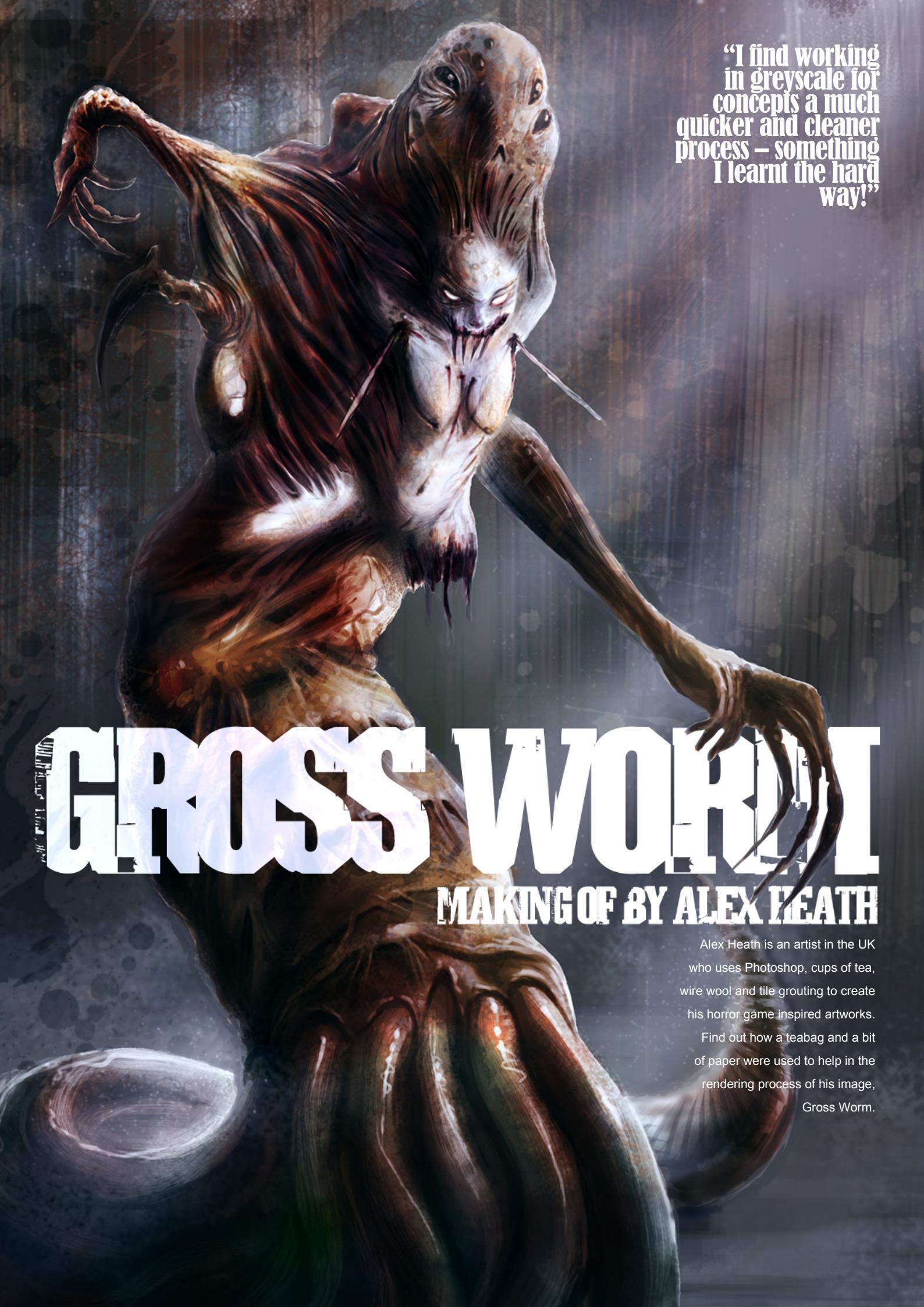
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Concept Art, Digital & Matte Painting Magazine
Issue 043 July 2009



“I find working in greyscale for concepts a much quicker and cleaner process – something I learnt the hard way!”

GROSS WORM

MAKING OF BY ALEX HEATH

Alex Heath is an artist in the UK who uses Photoshop, cups of tea, wire wool and tile grouting to create his horror game inspired artworks.

Find out how a teabag and a bit of paper were used to help in the rendering process of his image,

Gross Worm.

MAKING OF GROSS WORM

Created In:

Photoshop

Concept

When I sat down to create this image I had a rough idea of what I wanted to show. Having played many games of the survival horror genre recently, namely Dead Space and Silent Hill, I decided I wanted to paint a creature that would be right at home in this kind of environment. I wanted the image to have a disturbing feel to it, something that plays on the viewer's mind, and I have found that a good way to achieve this kind of unease is to mix beauty and innocence with something horrible and scary; the juxtaposition of the two generally causes the viewer to ask questions and feel uneasy about the creature. It sounds horrible; however, for the type of genre it's for, it's actually quite fitting!

The Sketch

I generally start a new artwork with a quick five-minute sketch to get down what I can see in my mind's eye. I tend to use line at this stage of the process, rather than blocking in values to make silhouettes, as I find line easier to understand when trying to get an idea down quickly (**Fig.01**).



Fig.01



Fig.02

So once the five-minute scribble was down I could then assess what I had against the concept I originally outlined, to see if it would fit with what I had planned to draw. So far so good! The worm-like body is representative of Medusa and the Gorgon sisters, recognisable monster figures; this coupled with the juxtaposition of the women joined to the monster looked just like the kind of creature I was after!

I would normally fix at this part of the image creation process if the image was going to take many, many hours of work. I decided, however, to only spend about 2 to 3 hours on the image and approach it as a creature concept, so I figured I would simply fix the issues whilst I rendered, as the sketch was acting more of a guide than a definitive design in this instance.

Values

When I work on creature and character concepts I generally block out values and details in many passes of greyscale (**Fig.02**). With each pass I decreased my brush size and added more detail, building up layers of underpainting and playing with design options. The brush I tend to use for this type of refining is a Standard Hard Round brush, with Opacity set to about 70% and Flow to 50%. I used this brush and the Eyedropper tool to blend my values. I find this process very quick, allowing me to change the design at will and to try out many options (**Fig.03**).



Fig.04

Later on during the process of refining forms and values, I started to fix the issues I had with the anatomy. As mentioned, this is very quick to do when working in greyscale; it doesn't take long to sort out (**Fig.04**). For the very last stage of the refinement process I used different brushes to start adding texture in order to



Fig.03

suggest details. I used custom brushes to add a skeletal look to the tail end (**Fig.05**), and a brush that I normally use for painting hair to sculpt the form on the tail's tentacles (**Fig.06**).

"I made a cup of tea and slammed the teabag on a sheet of white paper"

I find that the suggestion of details in this type of image works to great effect; the mind fills in the gaps and makes the image appear more detailed than it is, which is something I have learned from studying other artists' work. I am learning to effectively use this technique in my own art.

Colour & Texture

Once I felt there was enough detail and the forms were reading correctly, I flattened the image (it was about eight layers at this point). I then added a new layer, set it to Overlay, and using a Soft Round brush I started to block in colour over the greyscale painting (**Fig.07**). The

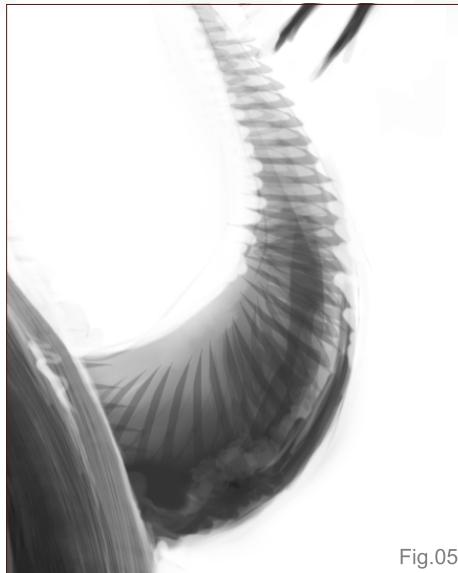


Fig.05

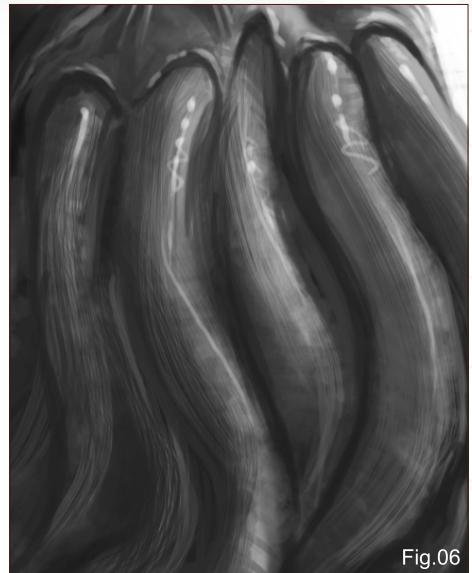


Fig.06

wonderful thing about Overlay layers is that you can try out many different colour schemes and textures very quickly, without destroying the image, which is why I find working in greyscale for concepts a much quicker and cleaner process – something I learnt the hard way!

Choosing the colours was something of an experiment. I had in mind that I wanted the

woman to look pale and dead, almost rotting, as she is just the host for the mutation that is the creature. This adds a small storytelling element to the character, making it more intriguing and frightening. The creature itself has the colours of dried blood and internal organs, to both show that it's alive as well as to bring out the skin tension and overall grotesque nature of it (**Fig.08**).



Fig.07



Fig.08

For the finishing touches I decided to make a new custom brush. I wanted to make some splatters to help convey some gore, but also to sell the slimy, wet body of the creature. To do this, I made a cup of tea and slammed the teabag on a sheet of white paper, took some photos of the spatters, and then took them into Photoshop to turn into brushes. This gave me a more natural spatter pattern – and was also a lot more fun than searching the internet for blood spatter and not getting the images I wanted!

Background

When I felt that the creature was coloured and textured to a standard I was happy with, I decided to add a quick background to help aid the creature. Again, if this image was a proper illustration I would have been working up the background as I went along and spent many hours on it, but as this was a creature concept I



Fig.09

Fig.10

decided to work this way round instead, as the background was only used to add some semantics.

I used the Quick Mask Mode in Photoshop to protect the creature, and started using custom brushes to flesh out some suggested detail in the background. The brushes I was using here were made from photos of wire wool and tile grouting, just playing around with colours and not thinking too hard (Fig.09). I mirrored colours and used the spatter brush I made earlier on the background, helping to tie the creature to the background and stopping it from looking stuck on top (Fig.10).

I added some lighting on a new layer to give the image some depth. This technique of volumetric lighting is great to add both depth and to suggest a dark and un-inhabitable environment; this technique is used a lot in games like Silent Hill (Fig.11). To finish up the background I took the mask off and added some lighting, tidying up the edges to include the creature in the background. This process took about five minutes, but really helped to sell the concept.

Finally, I flattened the image once more and went to Layer > New Adjustment Layer > Color Balance. This is an awesome tool which allows you to change the highlights, midtones and shadows independently. I use this technique a fair amount when producing this type of work; again, it's just experimenting and seeing what looks best. I decided that a cooler light source and colder colours in the shadows made the image look a lot scarier, and gave the background some more punch. And voilà! She's finished (Fig.12).



Fig.11

Alex Heath

For more from this artist visit:

Online Sketchbook: <http://www.conceptart.org/>

forums/showthread.php?t=142378&page=5

Or contact them at:

heath.himself@gmail.com



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: VOLUME 1

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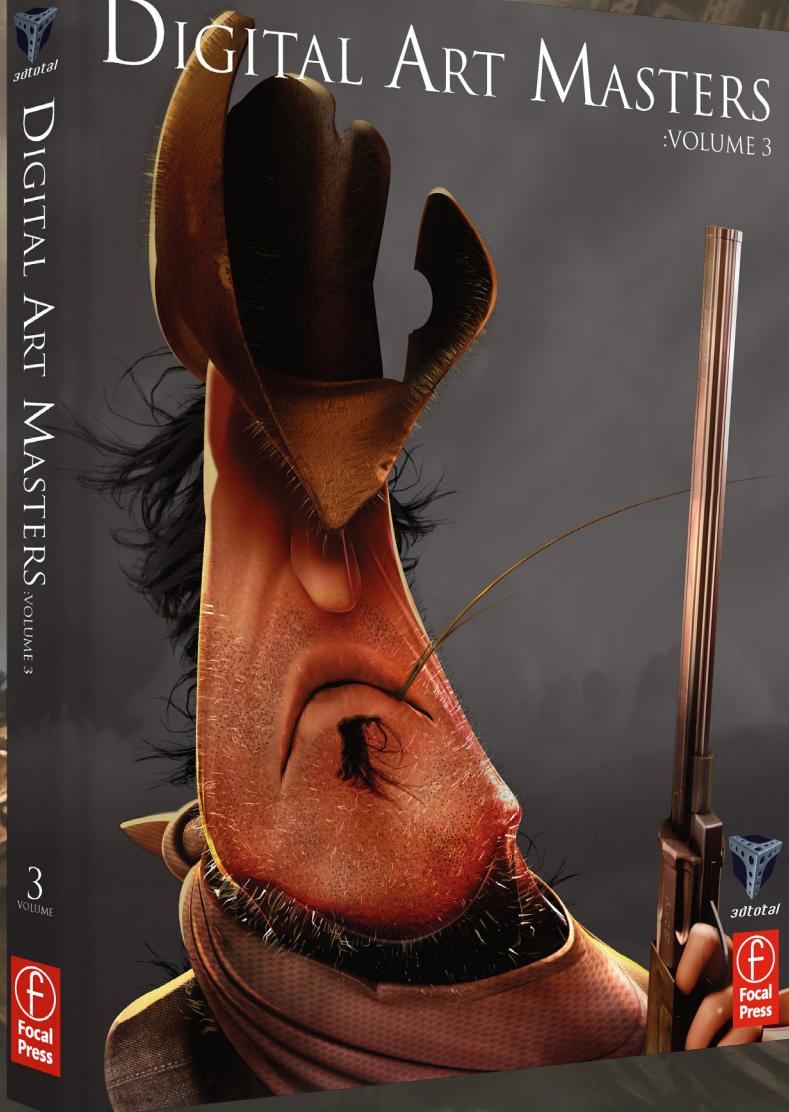
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DIGITAL ART MASTERS VOLUME 3



With the release of 3DTotal's new book, *Digital Art Masters: Volume 3*, we have some exclusive chapters for you...

This book is more than just an artwork book. Not only does it feature full-colour, full-page images, but each artist has given a detailed description, in their own words, of the creation process behind each piece of published artwork. And they've done it especially for this book!

This month we feature:

"The Machine"
by Matt Dixon



The following shots of the "The Machine" book pages are featured here in full-resolution and can be read by zooming in...



THE MACHINE

BY MATT DIXON

INTRODUCTION
 "The Machine" was created for a challenge run by CGSociety.org. The theme was "Master and Servant". Perhaps because I spend most of my life sitting at a computer, the subject immediately suggested the connection many of us have with technology, so I set out to create an image to explore the relationship between man and machine. First ideas often have a clarity and simplicity that makes them hard to improve upon, so I pursued my initial, rather literal, interpretation of machine as a giant robot with humanity represented by a child. A strong contrast in the scale of the characters helps to emphasize



Fig. 01
 the potential power of technology against the vulnerability of mankind, so I sought to maximize this juxtaposition in my initial sketches (Fig.01-03).



WORKFLOW
 Having settled on a composition, I produced a color rough (Fig.04). This allowed me to quickly experiment with color to find a harmonious palette for the final painting. Half an hour's work here also helped me to visualize the finished piece, giving me a clear goal to work towards. I find this very useful to keep me motivated during the painting process – if I have a good idea what I'm aiming for, I have a better feel for where I am along the journey to that point as I work.

Now the painting begins! I started with a simple value study (Fig.05). Often, an early sketch will be quite adequate for this purpose, but in this case I wanted to make some subtle changes to the robot's pose and design.

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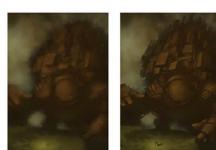
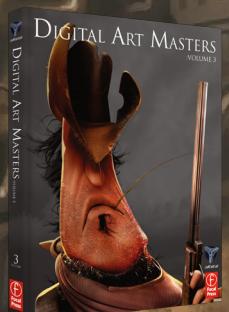
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When complete, the value study was set to the "multiply" blend mode and I applied a simple wash of color on the background layer (Fig.06). I reduced the opacity on the value layer a little to allow more of the color to come through and to reduce the tonal range, so I could work from mid to low base colors towards higher values.

Managing lots of layers distracts me from the business of painting, so at this point I flattened the image. From here all the painting was done on a single layer (Fig.07). I then began to paint, refining the shapes that remained from the value sketch. My process is one of gradual refinement, which gives me the impression of the painting "coming into focus" as I work. I think this is an economical process, helping me to manage the amount of detail I need to apply.

I work from dark to light. It feels like I'm pulling the shapes out of the darkness, which gives me a good



impression of the form I'm creating (Fig.08). Note how roughly defined the hands of the robot were at this stage.

As I work from dark to light, I'm also working from broad to fine marks (Fig.09). Notice how the hands have changed from the previous step, and the city on the robot's back has been refined and detailed. At this point I also scaled the image within the canvas to give me some extra space to expand the city upwards. Isn't working digitally wonderful!

With the basic image defined and tidy, I could then begin to render. This relatively quick process brought a big change to the image (Fig.10). Adding highlights, a few fine details and deepening the shadows suddenly made the painting look much more complete.

All the important elements were now in place. All that remained was to refine and improve what's already there (Fig.11). At this point, I detailed the sky with finishing touches to the little girl, and made the final refinements to the robot. Eventually I rejected the strong hue of the sky in the color rough, opting instead for more neutral tones that drew less attention from the robot and didn't set such an aggressive mood. I added some subtle purple and blue to the sky to balance with the flowers around the girl. The final task was to make a few adjustments to color and contrast and the piece was finished!



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CONCLUSION
 "The Machine" was unusual for me, in that the original concept remained basically unchanged throughout. One of the benefits of digital painting is the infinite opportunity we have to manipulate and change an image as we work, and I often take advantage of the fact, adjusting and adding to a piece as new ideas present themselves. This image is a reminder to me that, as I stated earlier, one's first ideas can often be the best – this has been one of my more popular paintings and I think that's partly due to the simplicity of the concept. I think most people "get" it pretty quickly.

Exactly what they "get" is another matter; however, and my favorite aspect of "The Machine" is the many different ways people interpret the image. Of course, there is no right or wrong way to see it. The painting is intentionally ambiguous, and I would suggest that how it is viewed has as much to do with the individual as the image itself.

Just like our relationship with technology.



Fig. 11

Just like our relationship with technology.

ARTIST PORTFOLIO



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